

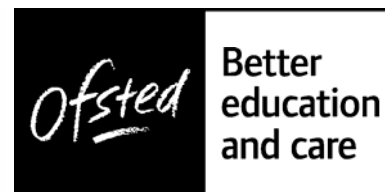
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Making Social Care
Better for People



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1 December 2005

Dear Ms Simcock

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 25 July 2005 to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your authority. We are grateful for the information which you provided to support this process and for the time made available by yourself and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

Being healthy

Outcomes of this area are good, particularly in the way in which effective partnerships between key services promote healthy lifestyles. The incidence of teenage pregnancy is high but, though figures fluctuate year on year, there has been an overall downward trend over time and work is being undertaken to target sex and relationships education. The proportion of schools participating in the Healthy Schools Initiative is high, with well over a half of those targeted by the local authority already having achieved the standard. Physical education and sport are actively promoted and provision of sporting activities is good overall. There is good access to health service provision for looked after children. Further development is needed to ensure that there is sufficient Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAHMS) provision for children with complex needs. Appropriate training on drugs education is being provided for school staff and resources are appropriately targeted.

Staying safe

Outcomes overall are good and performance is improving. The percentage of initial assessments undertaken within seven days is comparable with similar councils. The percentage of core assessments undertaken within 35 days has risen, but the overall number of assessments remains extremely high and the council is re-examining practice to ensure that reporting is accurate. The percentage of re-referrals to social services made within 12 months and the numbers of child protection re-registrations

have both fallen significantly and performance is now good. Staff from the dedicated team for children with disabilities undertake child protection investigations when these arise, and interpreters are available to assist if necessary with British Sign Language and Makaton. All schools inspected have at least satisfactory provision for pupils' care, welfare and safety, with good provision in almost 50% of schools. Schools have appropriate systems for children protection.

There are fewer looked after children in Hartlepool than in similar councils. The stability of placements within the year is very good but, although the long-term stability of foster placements for looked after children has improved from a low level further improvement should be made. All looked after children have a named and qualified social worker and all have pathway plans. Fewer children are placed for adoption compared to similar councils, and a lower number of adoption orders are made. The quality of the council's fostering service is good.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes for this area are good, with particular strengths in some areas. The overall quality of early years provision is effective, with significant increases in the range of providers and with very good partnerships developing to improve provision. Results at the end of Key Stage 1 are above the national average in reading and writing; they are in line with national averages in mathematics. Standards attained by 11 year olds have risen significantly and results in the 2004 national tests for 1 year olds were the most improved nationally.

Although standards in Key Stage 3 are in line with statistical neighbours in English and mathematics, they are below the national average and are not yet reflecting the improvements seen in Key Stage 2. The achievement of boys through Key Stage 3 is a continuing concern and the raising of boys' achievement continues to be a key priority within the Education Development Plan. Results at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) have improved in line with the trend nationally although the rate of increase has been greater in the percentage of pupils gaining at least five A* to C GCSEs with standards now similar to those in other local authorities. However, the percentage of pupils gaining at least five A* to G GCSEs, including English and mathematics, remains below average and continues to be a priority for improvement. The percentage of looked after children gaining at least one GCSE is below that of similar councils and nationally. There is good provision for curriculum enrichment within schools and also for extended provision beyond the school day.

Attendance has improved and exclusions are falling. However, too many pupils with special educational needs have been excluded in recent years. Careful analysis has been undertaken of the reasons for this and it has led to increased training and advice for schools on the use of Pastoral Support Plans. Educational provision for excluded

pupils is satisfactory but too few are being reintegrated, with more receiving alternative provision for more than one year compared to similar authorities.

Support for school improvement is very good: the number of schools in Ofsted categories of concern has fallen and is broadly in line with the national average. Good partnerships have been created to support schools and to improve access to extended provision.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes for this area are satisfactory. There is an effective structure for partnership working. The performance measures for youth crime have been consistently met in most areas, although current performance is below the target for the involvement of young offenders in education, employment and training. Recidivism rates are higher than the national average. A Family Support Panel has been established to ensure that those children most at risk of offending are appropriately targeted by mainstream services. Although the numbers were small in 2004/05, final warnings and convictions of looked after children have risen and are currently double the rate in similar councils.

There is a strong commitment to supporting improved transition between private nursery providers and schools. Some strategies have been implemented to support the transition of vulnerable pupils into secondary school. However, too few looked after children are involved in contributing to their reviews.

There is an appropriate range of opportunities for young people, including those with disabilities, to participate in service development and this has led to changes in council service strategies and procedures. Young people are consulted about education service activities and school councils are widely used to involve children in decision making. The council is aware that opportunities for participation need to be extended. Engagement with black and minority ethnic communities is developing.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes for this area are good overall. The number of care leavers in education, employment and training is good and there are plans to further strengthen multi-agency support for young people leaving care. The take up of direct payments for children with disabilities needs to be developed.

Overall, the quality of education provided for 14 to 19 year-olds is good. Average point scores for students entering GCSE and vocational education along with advanced level/advanced subsidiary are well above that of similar councils and in line with the national average and the 14 to 19 curriculum has been developed through a strong and innovative partnership. The increase in young people progressing to higher education is in line with the national average. There are good links between the local authority and

the local Learning and Skills Council. A strategic partnership group for the education of 14 to 19 year olds has led to increased coherence between providers.

Arrangements for children with disabilities to move between children’s and adult social care have been too informal but a new transitions policy has been agreed and new arrangements are to be implemented in the near future to improve Person Centred Planning.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • partnership working • promotion of the Healthy Schools’ initiative and of sport and leisure activity • access to health services for looked after children. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMHS services for children and young people with complex needs.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of the fostering service • reducing number of re-referrals to social services and child protection re-registrations • stability of placements for looked after children within the year. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • long-term stability of placements for looked after children • the number of looked after children placed for adoption.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overall quality of early years provision and increased provision for childcare • partnership working • progress in tackling absence • improvement in standards at Key Stage 2 and at five A* to C GCSEs. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the achievement of boys in Key Stage 3 • attainment of five A* to G at GCSE including English and mathematics • achievement of looked after children • reintegration of excluded pupils.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • multi-agency working • involvement of children and young people in contributing to the development of service delivery. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the involvement of looked after children in their reviews • transition arrangements for young people from children’s to adults’ care.

<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the quality of provision for 14 to 19 year olds and effective partnership working improved numbers of care leavers in education, training and employment. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> take-up of direct payments.
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Service management

Capacity for further improvement is good. There are clear and challenging ambitions to improve the outcomes for children and young people with education and social care being priorities for the council. Strong partnerships and good links have been established between organisations and services to support improvement. There are clear priorities and a range of well documented and well planned strategies. The strategy for school improvement is very good and schools are very positive about the support they receive from council services. Resources are appropriately targeted to priority areas, with new services being commissioned to meet gaps in provision.

There is active leadership provided by the Mayor, lead members and the Chief Executive for improving both the council's education and social care provision. Partnership working is improving as strategies become more closely integrated. There have been some changes in the leadership of key services. A Director of Children's Services has been appointed and service departments are being restructured. The capacity of management in education to implement continued improvements is good. Social services have experienced long-term budget pressures and these continue to be a challenge. The cost of placing children in children's homes and foster care remains high and is increasing. Although plans are in place to increase the council's pool of foster carers, this has not yet delivered the necessary improvement in choice and efficiency. Staff turnover in social services is low but sickness absence is higher than in similar councils. Although current management capacity in social services is good, organisational and personnel changes do pose a risk.

Performance management arrangements are in place and best value principles are used appropriately to review services. The council's own knowledge about its performance is good and used effectively to drive improvements in outcomes for children and young people.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Action is taken to promote children and young people's mental health:

- progress made in relation to CAMHS services for children and young people with complex needs.

Staying safe

Looked after children live in safe environments and are protected from abuse and exploitation:

- improvements in the long term stability of looked after children placements.

Enjoying and achieving

Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and to achieve highly:

- the impact of actions to raise the achievement of boys in Key Stage 3
- improvements in attainment at Key Stage 4, particularly at five A* to G including English and mathematics
- the reintegration of excluded pupils into mainstream education.

Making a positive contribution

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to make a positive contribution:

Children and young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups, are supported in managing changes and responding to challenges in their lives:

- the involvement of looked after children in their reviews and planning for their future
- the impact of new arrangements to improve transition arrangements for young people from children's to adults' care.

Achieving economic well-being

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to achieve economic well-being:

- the promotion and take-up of direct payments.

Final judgements

Please see your final annual performance assessment judgements attached at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely



Flo Hadley
Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



Jonathan Phillips
Director – Quality, Performance and Methods
Commission for Social Care Inspection

APA final judgements 2005: Hartlepool Borough Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	2
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	3

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Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Very good
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good/promising
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate