



Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Mr Clark

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

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 27 June 2005 to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your authority. We are grateful for the information that you provided to support this process and for the time made available by you and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

Being healthy

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. There are some particularly good aspects as a result of healthy outcomes promoted universally through schools. Participation in sport in most schools is good and there are further plans for a Borough wide sports scheme to come into effect in September 2005. The council has the second lowest rate of teenage pregnancies in London and the thirteenth lowest rate in England. There is good take up of the Healthy Schools Standards scheme and healthy choices programme involving high numbers of children. However, outcomes for looked after children are less well developed.

Life chances of children with disabilities and special needs are identified as one of the council's five main priorities for 2005-06 and the impact will need to be demonstrated in the coming year. The percentage of looked after children who received health checks has decreased to an unsatisfactory rate of 56%, well below the levels found in comparable authorities.

Health visitors are linked to schools and pre-schools, building on established partnerships to improve health outcomes for the very youngest children.

Young people showing mental health difficulties are appropriately referred to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) although there is a low number of a permanent staff to do this work. The council plans to agree a new contract for its CAMHS service with the Central and North West London Mental Health Trust and the outcomes of this provision will be reviewed.

Staying safe

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. Safeguarding activities and the operation of health and safety and child protection in schools promote a safe environment.

A multi-agency Safeguarding Board has developed and implemented policies on children who go missing and child prostitution, and has issued guidance on safe-parenting to the wider public in 13 languages. There are a number of initiatives in place to support children who are the victims of bullying, discrimination, domestic violence or crime.

There is an integrated referral system for children in need and social workers are linked to schools. The number of referrals has increased. The proportion of initial assessments completed within seven days has decreased to a level that is just below the average of comparator groups of councils for the previous year. The rate of core assessments completed within 35 working days has increased to a level that is above the national average.

Numbers of children on the Child Protection Register have increased. The rate of de-registration is now improving, especially for children and young people who have been on the register for two years or longer. All children on the register have a key worker and are reviewed at the required frequency. Although they remain within the "good" range, the numbers of re-registrations is also increasing. Whilst this may be attributable to an increased focus on issues of neglect, the council may wish to fully investigate the reasons for the increased rate of re-registrations.

Not all looked after children experience stability of placements. The percentage of looked after children who had three or more placements during the year increased sharply from 5.7% to the unacceptable level of 20.5%. The percentage of children looked after for more than four years who have been in placement for at least two years has risen to over 41.9%, which is an increase from the previous year but remains an area for development.

Almost all looked after children are allocated to a qualified social worker and the number of children placed in residential care has fallen. At the same time, there have been fewer kinship placements. The council has set up a new initiative to recruit a wider range of foster carers, including more black and minority ethnic carers. The

number of looked after children under 10 years of age placed for adoption or in foster care is in line with the outer London average. In addition, there has been an increase in the total percentage of all looked after children placed for adoption, all of whom were placed for adoption within twelve months of the Best Interests Decision. But only 1.5% of looked after children were adopted from care, below the minimum threshold.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. At the end of Key Stage 1 children achieve standards above national averages and statistical neighbours. Boys benefit particularly from Wave 3 catch-up strategies in reading and writing although the performance of all children in mathematics has dipped.

Standards in Key Stages 2 to 4 are consistently above national averages and the highest among similar authorities at Key Stage 2. Satisfactory support is in place for the one school in a category of concern where weaknesses are identified at Key Stage 2. Progress between key stages is very good and in the top national quartile from Key Stage 3 to 4. The percentage of young people leaving school with at least one GCSE at grade A* to G is above the national average, including looked after children and those with special educational needs without statements. The percentage of pupils passing five or more A* to G grades at GCSE is about the same as statistical neighbours and rising in line with national trends. A lower percentage of looked after children and pupils with statements of special educational needs attain five or more A* to G grades at GCSE in the area, as is the case nationally. Raising attainment for looked after children is now an agreed target, with an innovative range of projects in place, steered by the cross-departmental Academic Attainment of Looked After Children Group. Some looked after children are making good progress, but it is too early to see the outcome of this intervention. Phase 3 of special educational needs delegation is now in place. There is a high level of support for children following the provision of a statement of special needs.

The council continues to monitor attendance issues with schools, especially with regard to families taking extended holidays to visit relatives overseas. Absence from primary school is declining in line with national trends, although the authorised absence rate remains higher than in similar councils. In secondary schools, the rate of unauthorised absence is particularly low. The rate for looked after children of absences of 25 days or more, taking authorised and unauthorised absences and pupils without a school place into account, is one of the highest rates in the country is very high. There has been some improvement due to the work of Welfare Call, which tracks the attendance of looked after children.

The rate of exclusions is difficult to compare with national averages because of the phase structure of schools. However, the council acknowledges that the level of exclusions is too high. Good provision is made for young people who are permanently

excluded and reintegration rates are high. The council has implemented a multi-agency rapid response team to prevent exclusions. Permanent exclusion of pupils with special educational needs has been avoided through support in schools.

Most schools have very good opportunities for enrichment and provide very good support to learning outside the school day. A range of sporting, cultural and leisure facilities is on offer, with support successfully targeted to enable identified groups of young people to use out of school activities and holiday schemes. Accreditation is available through good use of Sportsmark and Artsmark funding. The council has established a multi-agency Academic Attainment Group for looked after children and undertaken an art project with Tate Britain.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. Very young children in early years settings are supported to behave well as they begin to develop outside their home environment. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered appropriately in schools. Schools councils operate in over 70% of schools, most of which are judged to have good community links.

Children and young people are encouraged to take part in service planning. The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership has a children's reference group that incorporates representation of schools and youth councils. A Youth Conference enabled 200 young people to meet senior officers and councillors to establish service priorities. There is a dedicated participation co-ordinator for children with disabilities. The first Harrow Children's Services Youth Achievement Awards were presented earlier in the year.

The rate of offending is low overall. Reoffending rates are low and have declined faster than the national rate. Of looked after children, 3.8 per cent received a final warning, conviction or reprimand. The Harrow Youth Offending Team reports that it gives greater significance to actual reconviction rates as a measure of its performance. However, the number of first timers in the Youth Justice system has increased at a rate above the national average. Harrow won a Youth Justice Board award for a DVD produced by young people supporting crime reduction. The Youth Offending Team has conducted a race equality audit, with a race action plan approved by the Youth Justice Board now being implemented, but it is too early to see the outcome of this innovation.

Ninety-three percent of looked after children, including those with special needs and disabilities, contribute to their reviews. Young people are invited to comment on the services provided for them. A children with disabilities team within children's services has been established. Children with disabilities are encouraged to participate in play and care settings.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are good. There is slow growth in childminding and full day care provision and rapid growth in registered out of school provision. The council prepares new early years childcare settings well. The percentage of children under five in maintained nursery and primary schools is below the national average. There are no Sure Start local programmes or Round One funded children’s centres although the council has nevertheless funded three children’s centres.

Eighty-five percent of students go on to full-time time post-16 studies, although there are no sixth forms, and the majority of these 18 to 19 year-olds progress to higher education. The percentage of young people not in education, employment or training at 6.5%, is comfortably below the target. Post-16 students with special educational needs are well supported. In partnership with colleges, the education service uses flexible funding to target areas of need and enhances a wider variety of opportunities including the refurbished vocational skills centre.

For looked after children, the Leaving Care Team has been judged as effective, particularly with regard to accessing suitable accommodation. The percentage of care leavers engaged in employment, training or education at 19 has risen from 64.3% to 73.8% and fallen back to 45% over a two year period, reflecting the number of care leavers with whom the council was in contact.

The number of parents of children with disabilities in receipt of Direct Payments has increased from last year, but remains an area for action for the council.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good universal services delivered through programmes in schools • low rate of teenage pregnancies. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low numbers of health checks for looked after children
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good partnership arrangements • good child protection and safety arrangements in schools • a range of safeguarding initiatives including informative publications in community languages. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • timescales of assessments • stability of placements for looked after children.

<p><i>Enjoying & achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overall standards in all key stages • progress from key stages 3 to 4 • good range of extended school activities and accreditation. 	<p><i>Enjoying & achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school attendance of looked after children • the attainment gap between looked after children and other children • exclusion rates.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positive behaviour promoted well in early years • high numbers of school councils, well integrated with strategic planning groups • high rate of contribution to reviews of looked after children • decline in re-offending rates. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase in first timers in the youth justice system.
<p><i>Economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high numbers of students going on to full-time post 16 studies • good preparation of early years providers. 	<p><i>Economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employment training and education of care leavers • the numbers of parents of disabled children in receipt of Direct Payments.

Service management

The council has produced a vision supported by a strategic framework for its children's services, with member support for the required changes. Social care and education services are incorporated within the People First Directorate. There is evidence of some effective partnership including head teacher representation in management groups. Inter-agency arrangements at a strategic level are good. This is exemplified by the early establishment of a Safeguarding Board, which has undertaken a number of initiatives including the development of policies, the provision of training, serious case reviews and a research handbook for social workers.

A new corporate plan and planning processes have been established. A draft joint commissioning strategy has been written, and joint panels and protocols have been established, but as yet there has been no use of Health Act flexibilities. Services for children and young people, raising achievement and closing the attainment gap for key groups are given adequate priority in the Community Strategy.

The council has conducted a significant needs analysis across services. Consultant reports and audits have been undertaken, for instance regarding school exclusions and behaviour management and race equality in the Youth Offending Team. Not all the results have been analysed and, in some cases, do not yet form the basis of action plans. As can be expected with this rate of innovation and change in strategy, many outcomes are yet to be seen. The views of children and young people and their parents and carers have been canvassed increasingly. This has resulted in the active involvement of young people in the design of a new children's home and services for looked after children, regular consultation with elected members and the creation of a dedicated HarrowKidz website.

The council's self evaluation places too high an emphasis on process and fails to take sufficient account of outcomes. Performance management is well developed in education and is adequate in other services.

A Corporate Parenting Committee has been established, the budget available to Children's Services has increased, and a new investment plan to reduce dependency on agency social care staff is being implemented. A multi-disciplinary complex needs panel has been established, and reports on performance are presented to members on a quarterly basis.

The People First Service plan for 2005/06 has identified a number of areas for investment for the coming year, including £1 million for children's services to support increased numbers of looked after children, £0.3 million for unaccompanied asylum seeker children to fund costs of care after their 16th birthday, and £0.25 million across social care for training.

A significant proportion of the social care budget, £4 million, is spent on independent fostering agency placements for approximately 70 children. The council has established a new system for reviewing such placements.

The council has adequate capacity to improve further.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Healthy lifestyles are promoted for children and young people:

- the rate of health checks for looked after children
- outcomes for children with special educational needs and for children with disabilities.

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

- impact of CAMHS service contract with the Central and North West London Mental Health Trust.

Staying safe

Children and young people are provided with a safe environment:

- stability of placements for looked after children.

The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:

- timescales of assessments
- the proportion of re-registrations on the Child Protection Register.

Enjoying and achieving

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy school and achieve:

- school attendance and attainment for looked after children.

Educational provision is made for children who do not attend school:

- exclusions rates.

Making a positive contribution

Action is taken to prevent offending and reduce re-offending by children and young people:

- the numbers of young people entering the Youth justice system for the first time.

Achieving economic well-being

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to achieve economic well-being:

- the take-up of employment, education and training of care leavers.

Final judgements

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

Yours sincerely



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Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS
Director – Quality, Performance and Methods
Commission for Social Care Inspection

APA final judgements 2005: London Borough of Harrow 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.	2
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	2

¹ Social Care judgements use CSCI's descriptors as follows:

LSIF Ratings	Local Services Inspectorate Forum (LSIF) Descriptors	CSCI RATINGS Serving People Well	CAPACITY TO IMPROVE DESCRIPTOR
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Overall serving people well	Very good
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Serving most people well	Good/promising
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Serving some people well	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Not serving people well	Inadequate