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Mr J Coughlan
Director of Children's Services
Hampshire County Council
The Castle
Winchester
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Dear Mr Coughlan

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment (APA) for your local authority, some aspects of which were conducted at the same time as the analysis stage of the joint area review (JAR). The 2006 APA informed the scoping of the JAR, and the initial findings of the 2007 APA were taken into account by the review team at the end of the analysis stage. The outcomes of the JAR were then considered alongside a review of recent data in arriving at the final APA judgements for 2007. As a result, many of the areas for development highlighted in this letter align with the recommendations in the JAR report and should be similarly aligned in any future action plan produced by the council and its partners. The judgements in the letter also draw on your assessment of progress or review of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) where it was available, and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted, other inspectorates and relevant bodies. We are grateful for the information you provided to support this and for the time given by you and your colleagues to the assessment process.

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 3

The council consistently delivers services above minimum requirements for users. A good contribution is made by services towards improving outcomes for all. Children's services are making a number of significant contributions to improving the health, safety, achievement and well-being of children and young people within a large and diverse authority.

The council's contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people is good. The CYPP is comprehensive in respect of priorities for improvement and development, reflecting a strong drive towards greater integration of service provision with partner agencies in line with national initiatives for improvement of outcomes for children and young people. The JAR highlighted services that reflect

good value for money with generally low expenditure on education and children's social care services but combined with good outcomes for children and young people.

Being healthy

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this area is good. National health indicators for children and young people in Hampshire are generally good and improving. For example, the reduction in the rate of teenage pregnancies is better than the national average along with new and ambitious targets for 2010 set in the Local Area Agreement. The number of schools that provide healthy living environments continues to increase. Two special schools have achieved Enhanced Healthy Schools status along with a quarter of mainstream schools. Half of all mainstream schools have now achieved Healthy Schools status.

The council and health partners continue to develop integrated service provision through established joint commissioning initiatives. A good range of multi-agency provision is currently targeting health promotion and improving parenting skills. For example, the council's close work with the drug alcohol action team has resulted in an increase in service provision leading to a positive impact on outcomes. This includes a 14% reduction of alcohol sales to underage drinkers and the recent appointment of a dedicated drug and alcohol worker for looked after children and young people.

Health inequalities within Hampshire are now more effectively highlighted through the council's development of a clear needs analysis process down to local ward level. This has helped to improve the identification of local areas and vulnerable groups that require a more timely and focussed multi-agency health intervention. For example, there continues to be some gaps in establishing a comprehensive and timely Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) across the county.

Looked after children and young people now have a dedicated nurse, providing a more holistic approach to health matters. The number of dental checks and health assessments completed on time for looked after children and young people is better than the national average. The JAR highlighted that access to CAMHS by looked after children and young people was appropriately targeted. However, the JAR also highlighted that the collection, analysis and access to relevant data and information systems for issues related to the health of all children and young people are inadequate. For example, the recording of immunisation rates for looked after children and young people over the last counting year is significantly lower than the national average and other local authorities with similar circumstances. The proportion of looked after children and young people under five years having up-to-date pre-school health checks also needs to improve. Currently performance is lower than the national average and the council's new statistical neighbours.

Areas for development

- Develop more effective recording of health data particularly for looked after children and young people in relation to immunisations and health checks for those aged under five years.
- Put in place a comprehensive and accessible CAHMS service across all wards.

Staying safe

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this area is good. This judgment is in line with the wider safeguarding judgement in the recent JAR. For example, the timeliness of completion of core and initial assessments of children and families in need continues to show year-on-year progress with performance above the national average and new statistical neighbours.

The council's revised CYPP clearly highlights appropriate, multi-agency safeguarding priorities for 2007-08. These are designed to develop safeguarding arrangements in line with national initiatives identified through the change for children programme. Priorities, therefore, reflect a strong drive towards greater integration of front line services to improve and develop more effective early intervention and prevention programmes. For example, the council has been participating in recent developments involving new and innovative integrated services which can provide a timely response to families in crisis. The aim is to reduce the numbers of looked after children and young people and those placed on the Child Protection Register. Current numbers of children and young people on the Child Protection Register and looked after children and young people are showing a continued downward trend and are below the national average and new statistical neighbours. The council is also involved in a number of local initiatives with partner agencies. The extended schools programme aims at reducing incidents of bullying, domestic violence, substance misuse and youth offending.

The council continues to ensure that all children and young people placed on the child protection register are allocated to a social worker. The timeliness of reviewing their child protection plans is good. The council incorporates child protection training across all of its services as a means of heightening awareness of safeguarding issues for all staff.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is now well established. The recent JAR identified a high level of commitment across all agencies with a strong focus on training LSCB members about the broader safeguarding remit which the LSCB now has in line with the national agenda. The recent introduction of more effective monitoring and tracking of the progress of serious case reviews should help to improve the timeliness in respect of completion, although further developments are

required to ensure effective monitoring of action points which come out of the review.

The JAR highlighted that in most areas management systems for the referral, assessment, allocation and transfer of case processes are good and that services are well managed. However, the council needs to improve significantly its performance with regards the timeliness of initial child protection conferences. This is currently nearly half the national average and statistical neighbours for conferences arranged within statutory time limits.

The council's revised CYPP highlights that Black and minority ethnic groups are currently under-represented in respect of service provision and that further work is required in establishing more accessible routes to all services.

Placement stability of looked after children and young people continues to be a priority for the council in terms of increasing the range of placement choice which is currently below the national average. School attendance by looked after children and young people deteriorated significantly over the past counting year to one of the lowest in the country. Poor school attendance impacts negatively on all *Every child matters* outcomes. The JAR 2007 has highlighted recent progress with looked after children and young people school attendance which is reported to be back more in line with the national average.

Areas for development

- Improve the timeliness of initial child protection conferences.
- Develop services that can more effectively capture the needs of Black and minority ethnic groups.
- Improve the range of placement choice for looked after children and young people.
- Improve corporate parenting with regard to promoting, and maintaining, good school attendance by looked after children and young people.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. Children and young people continue to outperform when compared to statistical neighbours and also when compared against the national average. Standards of attainment are consistently above average across all key stages and have been since 2002. Schools continue to make a difference to children and young people's achievement as they move through the key stages and value added data from Key Stages 2 to 3 improved in 2006. Progress from Key Stages 2 to 4 is also above the national average. There is overall good performance for 14- to 19-year-olds with the number of 16-year-olds gaining five GCSEs at grades A*–C

above the national average. There are some variations in achievement and standards across the county depending on the school's locality and its intake of pupils. However, the local authority gives appropriate focus to supporting schools in difficulty and supports schools with higher numbers of looked after children and young people, and those from minority groups.

There are a greater number than last year of schools causing concern both to the authority as well as identified as in a category by Ofsted. Two schools currently require special measures. The local authority takes this aspect of its work seriously and knows its schools very well. Appropriate action is taken early to identify schools which are underachieving and the local authority is very active in giving support. Their statements of action to support schools are generally well written and address the needs for improvement with appropriately timed resources. As a consequence, more schools have recently come out of category than have been put in, particularly in the summer term of 2007. This is a good example of the local authority's determination to improve schools overall.

Attendance in all schools is in line with the national average and statistical neighbours and authorised absences are lower than the national average. Unauthorised absences, while lower than the national average in primary schools, are slightly higher for secondary schools. The authority has taken action to reduce the proportion of looked after children and young people absent from school for 25 days so, that at the time of the JAR, the figure was 12%. This was slightly higher than comparators and the national average. However the recently validated data for 2006/07 show a substantial increase in this figure to nearly 25%.

The attainment of Black and minority ethnic groups is improving. The local authority has introduced improved procedures for tracking children and young people's achievement. Most other vulnerable children and young people, for example, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make at least satisfactory, and often better, progress than their peers. The local authority has a clear commitment to inclusion and schools receive good support. The analysis of data about the progress of the most vulnerable children is outstanding. Special school provision is very good and many are judged as outstanding with exclusions well below the national average. More looked after children and young people than last year are taking, and achieving, GCSEs at grades A* to C.

Children are receiving a good start to their education. The provision for the early years foundation stage is good. An above average proportion of early years settings are judged to be good, or outstanding, in Ofsted inspections. There is an emphasis on early intervention and the local authority provides pre-school support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most schools are providing effective education, care and services to meet the needs of all learners.

The Tellus2 survey of children and young people showed that on the whole they enjoy school and are proud of their achievements. This view is supported by school inspections where almost all children and young people are judged to enjoy school.

Children and young people's attitudes and behaviour in schools are mostly good or better. The role of school councillors in schools is well established. Well targeted preventative work and good implementation of the authority's behaviour strategy has ensured that few children and young people are excluded from schools.

Areas for development

- Continue to focus support through effective strategy work and targeted resources ensuring that all schools can continue to improve to the level of the best.
- Improve the attendance of looked after children and young people.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. Children and young people's involvement in making decisions about the services they receive is given a strong focus and as a result, services, activities and programmes are shaped to meet children and young people's needs and wishes. The outcomes from these services continue to improve. For example, there has been an increase in the number children and young people contributing to their individual reviews with 82% involvement recorded this year, a rise of 6%. Nearly two-thirds of schools are involved in the remodelling programme for extended schools and 350 schools will offer the core provision this September.

Children and young people have provided the council, and the Tellus2 survey, with positive feedback about the range and quality of services. School councils are firmly established in almost all schools and these views are taken seriously by the council. Information and advice provided by council services for children and young people needing support at challenging times is good.

Children and young people have a direct contact with councillors so their views can be heard and the local authority is committed to hearing the views of its young people. Over 300 schools have taken part in the training for the right, respect and responsibilities programme. There is evidence from school inspection reports that schools encourage pupils to get involved with the local community and this was good or better in over a third of schools; this is above statistical neighbours and the national average.

Parents and carers are well supported by children's centres and multi agency preventative work. The number of children and young people who offend is reducing. A wide range of well targeted support is helping to reduce the number of looked after children and young people. The number of children and young people in need is also reducing. There is a wide ranging protocol on joint working which has been agreed with the youth offending service, including work to safeguard children and young people appearing in court. There are some good examples of police

engaging with children and young people through their schools and colleges to aid crime prevention.

The collection and analysis of data on children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding. The percentage of statements completed within the statutory timescales is good and the number of new statements issued has decreased faster than that found nationally. The local authority has a clear commitment to inclusion and schools receive good support. Provision for special needs is very good across all schools and settings. Special schools are particularly strong, more receiving good or outstanding judgements than the national average.

Area for development

- Continue to ensure that strategies planned for this area have the impact to improve the contribution made by children and young people to decision making and planning.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. Strong corporate parenting helps to promote the economic well-being of looked after children. Economic well being is judged to be good or better in over two thirds of schools and this is above the national average.

The local authority's 14–19 strategy is sensible, realistic and complements those produced by Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight unitary authorities. It has clear aims and contains useful sections on learner entitlement, the curriculum, continuity and progression, support, guidance and inclusion, together with a 14–19 action plan. As a consequence, the proportion of young people in post-16 education is high at 80% and their success at Levels 1, 2, and 3 is above the national average. The proportion of 19-year-olds with Level 2 or equivalent qualifications is above the national average and the overall success rates for 16- to 18-year-olds on all courses have improved and are currently above the national average. The proportion of young people accessing work-based learning has improved and is now above the national average. Apprenticeship completions and Entry to Employment completions are also above the national average. The proportion of learners aged 19 with Level 3 qualifications such as A-level or BTEC National is also above the national average. The success rate of work-based learners is also higher than the national average, although the number who successfully completed a national vocational qualification fell last year to below the national average. Annual assessment visits to colleges this year indicate that their success rates for 16- to 18-year-olds has also improved.

The number of young people not in education, employment or training is below the national average by between 2% and 6%, and is lower than their learning skills partners in Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight. There are higher percentages in some areas of the county and the local Learning and Skills Council and the Connexions service are well aware of these. The local authority's action plan

is sensible and identifies characteristics of young people most likely to become not in education, employment or training. The data is analysed thoroughly and actions are outlined to reduce the proportion of young people in this category. There is detailed, and up-to-date, analysis of participation and progression rates by ethnicity and gender. The analysis also includes vulnerable groups such as teenage parents, asylum seekers, young carers and those in custody. There has been a positive increase in the number of childcare places available to enable parents to return to work.

More young people than last year who were in care are now either employed or in education at age 19. The local authority provides more work placements, summer school and weekly drop-ins for specialist information or to help with accommodation and finance.

Area for development

- Further reduce the proportion of young people not engaged in education, training and employment.

Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council has a good capacity to improve its services for children and young people. This judgement is in line with the recent JAR inspection judgement.

The council maintains strong and consistent member support for the children's change agenda. Children's services priorities have clear links with broader council responsibilities highlighted by the successful integration within corporate priority areas of the locally identified needs of children and young people.

The council continues to develop services through established partnerships. The strong drive towards joint commissioning and new multi-agency working arrangements has helped to develop service integration and overall capacity. Initiatives such as joint work with CAMHS to reduce out-of-county placements for tier 4 users and alignment of the new Primary Care Trust with established children's service locality teams has the potential to impact positively on capacity and demonstrate greater value-for-money.

The council's children's services review and evaluation process is focused through the CYPP and set targets. Outcomes help to enhance and inform performance management. Clear focus on *Every child matters* is maintained in the council's partnership work with voluntary agencies which have to demonstrate how grant funding requests can improve the *Every child matters* outcomes. The recent JAR, however, identified that further development was required in fully engaging the voluntary sector at a strategic and operational level to further enhance capacity. The council's children's services performance management, and the monitoring of *Every child matters* outcomes, have been poor in relation to highlighting some deficiencies

in service provision for looked after children and young people such as recent poor school attendance and recording of immunisation rates.

The council's children's services has a limited budget overspend and good strategies to increase revenue such as Schools Forum funding providing an additional revenue of £1.5 million over the next two years. The JAR identified generally low expenditure on education and children's social care services yet good outcomes. Expenditure is lower than the national average and new statistical neighbours. The council has also made good progress in developing the use of direct payments for children and young people and their families, enabling more flexibility and choice around service provision.

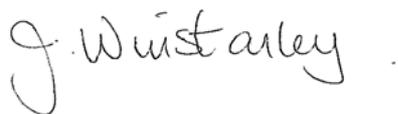
The council has made very good progress since last year's APA in respect of recruitment and retention of key children's services personnel such as qualified social workers. Performance is now better than the national average and new statistical neighbours.

Areas for development

- Improve performance monitoring and effective response to the needs of looked after children and young people.
- Ensure greater engagement with the voluntary sector at a strategic level.

The children's services grade is the performance rating for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will also provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment to be published by the Audit Commission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection