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17 December 2008

Mr Andrew Christie
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Town Hall
King Street
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Dear Mr Christie

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham 2008

This letter summarises the findings of the 2008 annual performance assessment (APA) for your council. The evaluations and judgements in the letter draw on a range of data and information which covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. As you know, the APA is not based on an inspection of your services and, therefore, can only provide a snapshot based on the evidence considered. As such, I am grateful to you for assuring the quality of the data provided.

Performance is judged on a four point scale as detailed in the handbook. I should emphasise that the grades awarded are based on an overall 'best fit' model. For instance, an outstanding judgement of Grade 4 reflects that overall most aspects, but not necessarily all, of the services in the area are working very well. We know that one of the features of outstanding provision is the drive for greater improvement and no council would suggest, and nor would Ofsted, that a judgement of outstanding indicates that everything is perfect. Similarly within a judgement of inadequate overall, Grade 1, there could be some aspects of the overall service that are adequate or even good. Judgements are made in a rounded way, balancing all of the evidence and giving due consideration to outcomes, local and national contexts, priorities and decision-making.



The following table sets out the grades awarded for performance in 2008.

Assessment judgement area	APA grade
Overall effectiveness of children's services	3
Being healthy	4
Staying safe	3
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	4

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate*

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 3

The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham continues to make a good contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people, and consistently delivers services above minimum requirements for users. Decisive action has successfully addressed most of the areas for development in last year's APA and the council's capacity to improve, including its management of services, is good. Services make an excellent contribution to improving health outcomes. Strengthened performance management of social care services has underpinned significant improvements to staying safe outcomes over the past year.

Services have contributed strongly to improved educational outcomes at Key Stage 4 that are now well above comparable councils and the national average. The achievement gap continues to reduce, but the council acknowledges that there is more to do to secure sustained improvements for looked after children. Strong multi-agency partnerships prevent offending by children and young people and enable those in care to make a positive contribution. Effective work with partners contributes to high numbers of young people who continue in learning at post-16 and to high achievement, although there are weaknesses in NVQ success rates and the completion rate of apprenticeships.

The council understands its strengths and weaknesses and has invested heavily in the staffing of children's services. This is proving effective in that a number of outcomes have shown significant improvement. Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services is outstanding.

Being healthy

Grade 4

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths

- Good collaborative work between health and children's services has led to very good outcomes such as a significant reduction in the teenage pregnancy rate, a very high proportion of mothers initiating breast-feeding, continued decrease in the infant mortality rate and excellent progress in achieving the healthy schools designation.
- Re-commissioning of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has improved prevention, outcomes for looked after children, and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities through better targeting of services.
- The very high percentage of looked after children who have annual health and dental checks.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportion of young people who are receiving treatment for substance misuse is lower than comparable councils. |
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Staying safe

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area underestimate a number of important weaknesses and overvalue the areas where progress has been made. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

Major strengths

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Significant improvement in completion rates of initial and core assessments. ▪ The review of child protection cases has been well managed. ▪ Very good performance in respect of adoption rates, with family and friends providing stable placements for looked after children. |
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Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ An increasing number of looked after children are placed in residential accommodation, this is in contrast to the declining number in similar councils. |
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Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area underestimate a number of important weaknesses and overvalue the areas where progress has been made. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

Major strengths

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standards at Key Stage 4 are well above comparable councils and the national average. ▪ The gap between the highest and lowest achieving secondary schools continues to reduce; there are no schools below Key Stage 4 floor targets. ▪ Attendance at secondary school has improved, and is above comparable councils and the national average. |
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Important weaknesses and areas for development

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exclusions from both primary and secondary schools have risen. ▪ Standards reached by looked after children are below those of similar councils. |
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Making a positive contribution

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong multi-agency partnerships and effective action by the youth offending service has resulted in a sustained decrease in the number of first time offenders in the youth justice system. ▪ The council has very effectively enabled children and young people to influence decision making about services that affect them. ▪ The number of children and young people in care who participate in their reviews is higher than comparable councils. ▪ The continued involvement of young people in youth service activities is above the national target.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A disproportionate number of black young people in the youth justice system.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area underestimate a number of important weaknesses and overvalue the areas where progress has been made. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standards at post-16, at levels 2 and 3, are above comparable councils and national averages. ▪ High numbers of vulnerable young people, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are in education, employment or training. ▪ Staying on rates post-16 have improved significantly and are now above both comparable councils and the national figure.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opportunities for work-based learning at post-16, particularly for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, remain limited. ▪ NVQ success rates for work-based learners are below national figures.

Capacity to improve, including the management of children’s services

Grade 4

The council’s capacity to improve and the management of its services for children and young people is outstanding. The council’s vision to become a ‘borough of opportunity’ is articulated strongly, understood widely by stakeholders and resourced well. The local area agreement is ambitious and sets out the council’s priorities clearly. Self-assessment is rigorous, generally accurate and used effectively to secure continuous improvement in most areas of the Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP). It rightly focuses on high and improved performance, but does not always take sufficient account of outcomes for children and young people in comparison with similar councils. For example, although the council rightly celebrates very good outcomes in secondary schools it does not fully take into account rising exclusions, average standards at Key Stage 1, and a fall in standards for looked after children.

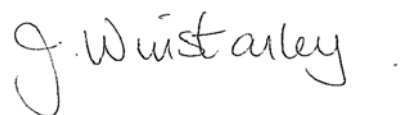
Health outcomes are excellent, including in particularly challenging areas such as the sustained reduction in the teenage pregnancy rate. The council has taken swift action since last year to improve the performance management of children’s social care services and to address workforce planning. This has led to notable improvement in a range of outcomes. Standards at Key Stage 4 have risen further. Equality has high priority and the attainment gap continues to close in secondary schools. The local council works effectively with a range of partners including neighbouring councils; for example, the excellent strategic work of the 14–19 partnership to deliver the new diplomas. These examples demonstrate effective, decisive leadership and good capacity to improve further.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A highly ambitious council that works effectively with key partners to secure improvements for children and young people, including vulnerable groups. ▪ Rigorous analysis of strengths and weaknesses and decisive action to improve performance.
Important weaknesses and areas for development

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.

We are grateful for the information you provided to support this process and for the time given by you and your colleagues during the assessment.

Yours sincerely

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

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection