

26 November 2007

Mr A Christie
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Town Hall
King Street
Hammersmith
London W6 9JU

Dear Mr Christie,

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment for your local authority, some aspects of which were conducted at the same time as the analysis stage of the recent joint area review. The 2006 annual performance assessment informed the scoping of the joint area review at the planning stage and the initial findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment were taken into account by the review team at the end of the analysis stage. The outcomes of the joint area review were then considered alongside a review of recent data in arriving at the final annual performance assessment judgements for 2007. As a result, many of the areas for development highlighted in this letter align with the recommendations in the joint area review 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 where it was available, and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted and other inspectorates. 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 for children and young people at a good level. Strengths outlined in last year's annual performance assessment have been sustained and most of the areas for improvement have been successfully addressed. Of particular significance are the improved outcomes for looked after children and young people, and raising the achievement of the most vulnerable and disaffected boys. The re-alignment of council services into the children's directorate has increased focus and effectiveness with the result that there is a clear focus on delivering the *Every child matters* agenda. Partnerships with other agencies have remained strong.

There remain matters in the area of staying safe that require further development such as the percentage of initial and core assessments completed within timescales, and support for children and young people de-registered from the Child Protection Register. The council also faces a significant challenge in reducing the number of surplus secondary school places, which remain high. Nonetheless, the important strategic work achieved by the council this year to establish a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) provides clear evidence of good capacity to further improve.

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.

Children have a good start in life; national targets are set and successfully met by the council in collaboration with partners. The relationship with the Primary Care Trust is a strength. Senior management teams work closely and there is a commitment to shared priorities. Infant mortality rates have declined and are lower than the national average, as are perinatal rates. Childhood immunisation rates have increased with challenging targets set for further improvement. Teenage conception rates amongst 15- to 17-year-olds have continued to decrease, although they are high for looked after children. A good range of specialist sexual health advice services is available. Clear priorities for action have been identified within the Children and Young People's Plan for reducing obesity and trialling a Department of Health obesity programme for high risk children. The numbers of breast-feeding mothers is above that of comparable councils, and the proportion of mothers smoking has decreased significantly and is now below the national average. Good progress has also been made with the number of schools achieving Healthy Schools status against the national target. A new, well regarded speech and language service for schools has significantly reduced waiting times for assessments and treatment.

Work focused on improving the health of looked after children and young people continues to ensure that these young people receive good, timely health services. Immunisation rates have increased. In addition, the council is successfully reducing the numbers of pregnant looked after children and young people through training; this is aimed at improving the early identification of this issue amongst teachers and social workers. A sexual health worker has been appointed to offer targeted support and this is also making a positive difference. However, there is more work to do to improve substance misuse assessments and interventions.

A comprehensive, 0 to 18 years CAMHS service was established in April 2007 following complex and successful negotiations with the Primary Care Trust. A service for children and young people with both learning difficulties and/or disabilities and mental health issues has been commissioned, and development is also underway for a multi-borough CAMHS outreach service. This demonstrates good progress towards

improving waiting times for CAMHS, which are currently above the national average. The response to referrals of children and young people with acute and non-acute problems has improved with all assessments completed on time. However, the joint area review team have reported that social work and CAMHS professionals do not always share the same understanding of the thresholds for access to CAMHS.

Good progress has been made to improve transitions for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities into adult services. For example, a joint protocol that includes parents and children has been developed and the transition information coordinator now collates and coordinates information about young people with complex needs who are moving towards transition. This has improved tracking and monitoring systems. Good specialist advice on cases has also become available through two transition social workers who work with more complex cases.

Areas for development:

- Ensure that recent developments in CAMHS are embedded and have impact.
- Improve substance misuse assessments and interventions.

Staying safe

Grade 2

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 adequate.

The council has made improvements to road safety, for example, of the 11 accidents involving children and young people in 2006, none were fatal. The joint area review also found examples of excellent multi-agency work to improve safety on the streets. Safer neighbourhood team policing is now in place across the whole borough with 15 fully staffed teams. The council and the Metropolitan Police are investing in two high risk areas in the borough with 24 hour, 7 day per week safer neighbourhood team coverage. The council is carrying out further work to develop a joint strategy to address the factors that negatively impact on children and young peoples' safety, including the culture of carrying weapons and knives.

There are good family support and prevention services in place which have been successful in keeping children and young people out of the care system. The contribution of the Adolescent Crisis Intervention and Support Team (ASSIST) is excellent in this regard. Tackling hard-to-reach families is a priority for the council, and this is reflected in the successful investment in an early intervention team who work with families in their own homes and encourage their participation in the children's centres. The common assessment framework has been successfully piloted and will be developed across the authority over the coming year. It will be supported by the development of a directory of services, and an information sharing protocol agreed by both the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the partnership board.

The numbers of children and young people on the Child Protection Register have risen, mainly because of domestic violence. However, significant progress is being made to extend preventative and family support services. The fieldwork carried out as part of the joint area review, for example, found that the five children's centres provide an effective network for families in greatest need. Improving the timeliness of assessments was highlighted in last year's annual performance assessment as an area for improvement and all child protection cases are allocated to a qualified social worker and reviewed on time. However, the percentage of initial and core assessments completed within timescales has fallen, and both are well below comparable councils.

The re-registration of children and young people on the Child Protection Register is comparatively high because the follow up of children once they are de-registered is insufficient. The joint area review reports that plans following de-registration do not consistently have the required impact, and that the electronic system used to record and monitor actions associated with the assessment and planning for children in need is yet to be fully embedded. However, service improvements include the contact and assessment team being brought together on one site together with the emergency duty team. The revised model of operation is also helping to improve the completion of initial assessments and response to domestic violence referrals; this was a priority area for the council to improve.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board has been successfully established with full endorsement from all partner agencies. There are adequate arrangements and procedures in place to safeguard children. There have been no serious case reviews in the past year. The Local Safeguarding Children Board has started an audit of safer recruitment practices across agencies, although this has not yet been completed.

The number of looked after children and young people continues to reduce as a result of good preventative measures and services. Outcomes are generally good, but not all looked after children and young people are allocated a qualified social worker. Where cases are allocated to an unqualified social worker their care is overseen by an experienced and qualified social worker. More children and young people are now being found local family placements. Reviews of care plans for children and young people are on time and focus appropriately on all aspects of children and young people's care, including health and education. Whilst the timeliness of reviews has improved, these are still below that of similar councils.

Outcomes for the adoption service are good. The number of adoptions has increased and they are completed in a timelier manner. The stability of placements continues to improve. The co-location of the looked after children and young people's social work teams, education in care, designated nurses for looked after children and young people, and CAMHS staff, has led to better integration of activity. Good outcomes for young people leaving care have been achieved; the Children's Rights Service is particularly effective in providing advocacy and support in resolving complaints.

The council is making good progress in ensuring that children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities live in safe environments and make a smooth transition to adult services. The number of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and with transitional plans in place has increased, and the majority of children and young people are now assessed.

Areas for development

- Follow up support for children de-registered from the child protection register.
- Timeliness of initial and core assessments.
- Ensure consistent allocation of all looked after children and young people to registered social workers.
- Timeliness of reviews for looked after children and young people.

Enjoying and achieving

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.

There has been good progress in most of the areas identified last year. The council has undertaken a series of clear actions to ensure that vulnerable groups are well supported. The 2006 annual performance assessment identified underperformance by both Black Caribbean and White British boys, in receipt of free school meals in secondary schools, as areas for improvement. The joint area review has reported that the performance of both these groups has improved and states that raising the achievement of the most vulnerable and disaffected boys has been particularly significant. Looked after children and young people now make good progress, which is also a significant improvement from last year. This reflects good multi-agency work with individuals to secure progress. More young people are now leaving care with GCSEs or an equivalent qualification. The attendance of looked after children and young people declined recently, but is still marginally better than both comparable authorities and the national picture. However, the number of looked after children and young people sitting at least one GCSE continues to decline and is now well below similar authorities. Evidence from school inspection reports shows that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress. The council now devolves funding for these pupils directly to schools so that more resources are available on the frontline.

Examination results at all key stages have been sustained or improved since last year. In the early years there is a good level of support and information provided by the council during the registration of childminders. The quality of childcare is better than that typically found nationally, and all provision contributes very well to children

making a good start to their education. The council is well aware that there are surplus childcare places and is doing all that it can to ensure that this more closely matches local need.

Outcomes in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 2 are above those of similar boroughs, and at Key Stage 3 they are well above. The five A* to C GCSE result including English and mathematics is particularly striking; at 49% it is significantly higher than the stretch target which the council was set. Post-16 examination results have improved, but outcomes show that achievement is good rather than outstanding as judged by the council.

The school improvement team has a challenging, rigorous and successful approach. There are now no schools in an Ofsted category of concern, and the large variation between the performance of secondary schools continues to reduce. Despite the best efforts of the council, attendance in primary schools declined during the 2005/06 academic year, largely due to an increase in authorised absences. Evidence provided by the council suggests that the 2006/07 figure will improve.

There are still a high number of surplus places in secondary schools, which has increased significantly this year. This is a stubborn legacy issue which represents a considerable challenge to the council over the next year. The council's decision to close one secondary school has now been withdrawn, and it is now reconfiguring its strategy to align it with the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme. The strategy will aim to address both the surplus places issue and parent's demands for high quality provision; in particular for more mixed non-faith schools with sixth forms.

Areas for development

- Reduce the high number of surplus secondary school places.
- Arrest the declining number of looked after children and young people sitting at least one GCSE.

Making a positive contribution

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 aspect is good.

The Children's Rights Service enables young people to participate in the corporate parenting panel which is attended by elected members. There are a very wide range of consultative forums and mechanisms for young people to become genuinely involved in decision making. The number of looked after children and young people who were given a final warning, reprimand or conviction remains in the top performance band. However, more could be done to involve them in decision making, as the number of looked after children and young people participating in

their own review is now below that of both comparable councils and the national figure.

The council is on track to achieve a stretch target for reduction of first time entrants into the criminal justice system. The rate of re-offending has been consistently below both comparable authorities and the national figure. Evidence from Ofsted inspections indicates that outcomes are better than both the national picture and comparable councils; 90% of schools were graded as good or outstanding for making a positive contribution. The results of the Audit Commission's school survey were positive overall and rated most of the council's services as above satisfactory. The proportion of young people aged 13 to 19 reached by the Youth Service increased by more than a fifth in 2006; it is now significantly above the national figure.

Area for development

- Increase the numbers of looked after children and young people participating in their own review.

Achieving economic well-being

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 aspect is good.

Examination outcomes are good at Post-16, but outcomes on vocational courses are not as good. GCSE results, including both English and mathematics, continue to improve. There has been a significant continued reduction in the numbers of young people not in employment, education or training, and the numbers are now below comparable councils. The percentage of looked after children and young people that are engaged in employment, education or training continues to increase and is above the national level. The council has secured a significant decrease in the length of time that young people spend in temporary accommodation.

The council has been successful in gaining accreditation to operate four of the new 14–19 diploma lines, two in partnership with other councils. This is an important strategic success. The priorities for 2007/08 are based on a good understanding of local need and the choice of vocational courses at Key Stage 4 is beginning to broaden; the number of young people opting for vocational courses has almost doubled since 2004. The joint area review reported that the council has worked hard and effectively to raise the standard of work based learning. However, the take-up remains low, particularly by those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and there are too few apprenticeship opportunities in the borough. Secondary schools rate the effectiveness of 14–19 provision in meeting local needs as below average. The council acknowledges that it is still in the early stages of developing effective partnerships with secondary schools to address the barriers to developing more effective 14–19 provision.

Areas for development

- Effective partnerships with secondary schools to improve 14–19 provision.
- Improve the outcomes of vocational courses.
- Increase the take-up of work based learning, particularly for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the number of apprenticeships.

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

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The capacity of the council to improve services for children and young people is good. There is a clear trend of improvement, particularly for vulnerable groups of young people.

The review of the Children and Young People's Plan has taken place with their involvement and clear priorities have been established for 2006-08 which are fully funded and resourced. The plan is comprehensive, inclusive and presents a clear ambition to enhance the life chances of every young person. The senior management team has now been established for over a year and is effectively driving through change. They take timely and effective action to remedy weaknesses. As a result the creation of the Children's Department is successfully moving forward at a good pace and a performance management culture is being developed and implemented. Aspects of the performance management of social care services are less well developed.

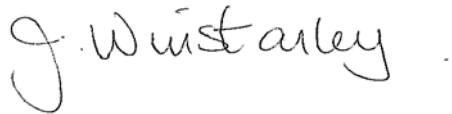
Children's services have achieved a balanced budget in the context of strict financial targets. There is now greater stability in the workforce; both the percentage of staff leaving during the year and the number of vacant posts have fallen. Social care has both a relatively high staffing level, and a high number of practice days. The arrangements to ensure the necessary infrastructure to effectively deliver the *Every Child Matters* agenda are well advanced, and governance arrangements to support effective partnership working are robust. This has been achieved whilst working through the first year of a new administration and the developing scrutiny of elected members.

Area for development

- Performance management and monitoring of social care services to better support business planning.

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". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a trailing dot at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection