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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Mr Christie

2006 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 2006 annual performance assessment (APA) process for your local 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.

Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded ¹
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 <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	4
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes 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	Excellent / outstanding
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate

The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham provide a service that consistently delivers above the minimum requirements for its children and young people. All services demonstrate how they are improving the well-being of children and young people and there are good outcomes in all five areas of Every Child Matters. The council has a clear grasp of its strengths and weaknesses and the strategies it needs to make improvements. It has made good efforts to address the areas for improvement identified in last year's APA and there has been considerable improvement in a number of the services it provides. Hammersmith and Fulham has an excellent capacity to improve its services further.

Being healthy

The council makes a good contribution towards improving the health of children and young people in the area. Working relationships between the council and its partners are strong and collaborative working is having positive effects. Healthy living is promoted in schools with a high number achieving Level 3 of the national healthy schools initiative. Almost all new pupils are screened by the school nursing service. The service provision in sexual health is good and conception rates amongst 15 to 17 year olds continue to fall and are below the London average. A high proportion of looked after children have had health and dental checks. Partnership working through the joint disability funding panel has improved services provided to children with disabilities. Rates of childhood immunisation have further increased by 14% and are high at 80%. The council has worked well to promote awareness of substance misuse and continues to develop a wide range of drugs prevention services. The referral of juveniles manifesting acute mental health difficulties to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) fell considerably in the second half of 2005, as did that of the council's statistical neighbours. Referrals of juveniles with non-acute mental health difficulties fluctuated during the year but overall remained high. There are plans to jointly recommission CAMHS into a birth to 18 service enhancing the links between the three tiers. This includes involving those children and young people who access CAMHS in the design and development of the service.

Staying safe

The council's contribution to outcomes in this area is generally good. Performance has improved significantly in many areas in the last year through audit and analysis systems and closer attention to resource allocation decisions. There is improved care planning in child protection work and numbers on the Child Protection Register (CPR) have been halved. There are more family support and prevention services available and these are working more effectively with vulnerable children and young people.

The council is very aware that initial assessments, particularly with regard to child protection work, are not being completed quickly enough. Plans are in place to improve this by creating a single referral and assessment service (RAS) on one site. Most core assessments are completed within timescales. All child protection cases are allocated and all have been reviewed. Recent scrutiny of cases re-referred to the CPR revealed the need for closer monitoring in future of kinship arrangements. There are strong performance management systems in place and robust auditing and analysis of outcomes.

The council is currently reporting exceptionally high referral and re-referral rates for social care services which they explain as a data accuracy issue rather than an actual problem. The recording of other evidence gives confidence in the quality of the overall data and provides support for this explanation. A new information technology (IT) system has been introduced which the council hopes will address this problem speedily.

The number of looked after children has reduced, in part due to close senior management scrutiny and involvement in resource allocation decisions. More are now in family placements or placed with relatives or friends as a result of the generous and flexible support offered to families. The stability of placements both in the short and long-term has improved and is good. Most placements are less than 20 miles from the borough, and safeguards and protocols for looked after children are fully operational and monitored. However, the number of adoptions fell last year and was low. This was a result of poor communication between teams, which has been addressed, the council forecasts significant improvement this year.

Too many children with disabilities are without transition plans; however work to improve transition planning between children's and adult services is progressing well.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution the council makes to children and young people's enjoyment of their education and achievement at school overall is good, with some areas for improvement.

The target for childcare places has been exceeded with effective targeting of many of these in disadvantaged areas within the borough. There is a borough wide quality assured childminding network, which has been nationally recognised as a model of good practice. Children's centres provide a good range of initiatives, such as early literacy and creative play, in preparation for the Foundation Stage. Most early years settings provide satisfactory or better outcomes for children to enjoy and achieve. Speech and language therapists are being seconded to providers to assist in improving approaches to language development.

Attainment at Key Stage 1 in reading and writing is slightly above that of statistical neighbours but below the national average. In mathematics it is well below the national average, and has been for three years. The rate of improvement is slower than that of statistical neighbours. The council is fully aware of this situation and has put a range of strategies in place to improve attainment in Key Stage 1. Attainment at Key Stage 2 showed an improvement on the previous year in all three core subjects and the trend overall is above the national rate and that of similar councils. The value added between Key Stage 1 and 2 is above average.

Improving performance at Key Stage 3 was an area of improvement in last year's APA. The results in 2005 indicate a substantial increase in attainment across all core subjects. These are now above statistical neighbours and in line with national averages. Results at Key Stage 4 have also improved and the proportion of students achieving five or more higher grade GCSE passes is now above the national average and statistical neighbours.

The large variation in performance between secondary schools still exists but the gap has been reduced and all secondary schools met the 2005 floor targets. The difference in performance of boys and girls reflects the national figure. There was, however, a considerable decline in the proportion of looked after children achieving GCSE qualifications compared to the previous two years and national figures. The council suggest that, compared to recent years, this cohort is overall much weaker academically. The variation in the performance of different groups of young people remains; in particular, there is underperformance by Black Caribbean boys and white boys in receipt of free school meals in secondary schools. The council is working with its secondary schools to address variations in performance.

Attendance in secondary schools is improving gradually and, overall, is in line with the national average, although unauthorised absence is below the national figure. In primary schools, attendance fell slightly in 2005, with an increase in the percentage of authorised absence which is above statistical neighbours and well above the national average. The council is very aware of the levels of attendance in each school and is working closely with those where it is an issue. The percentage of permanent exclusions is below national figures and the percentage of fixed-term exclusions is in line. All permanently excluded pupils receive over 20 hours alternative tuition a week.

The two secondary schools subject to special measures have been removed from this category during the year and there is now only one primary school with a notice to improve. The council is supporting this school to seek rapid improvements. In consultation with headteachers and governors, the council is currently reviewing its current model of support and challenge to schools so as to provide a more effective improvement service that better meets the needs of schools

There are substantial surplus places in both primary and secondary phases. The council is fully aware of this and is addressing the issue through its 11-19 strategy and Building Schools for the Future bid.

The council has increased its spending on the Youth Service and broadened its provision. In the last year, the number of young people using its services significantly improved, with attendances for youth provision increasing by 12%. There has also been a considerable increase in the number of children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities accessing the play service.

Making a positive contribution

Performance in this outcome area is good. The council has consulted widely with children and young people about the services it provides and over 20 agencies and services have children and young people's consultative forums. Looked after children and those with learning difficulties and disabilities have good opportunities to present their views about the services provided for them. The council's Youth Forum is involved in the drafting of a young person's version of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and has met with the Director of Children's Services. A development since last year has been the increased involvement of young people at the strategic level of decision making and their

participation in key meetings. There has been a substantial increase in the number of young people voting in the elections for the Youth Parliament. Although the specific forums consulted about the council are reported to, there is no mechanism for informing all children and young people of the outcomes of their peers' suggestions on improving services.

There is a wide range of provision in place that contributes to the development of children and young people and most are given good support in managing changes to their lives. Good support was provided for 14 traveller families in the transition of children from primary to secondary school. The participation of looked after children in their reviews is good.

There has been a further 8% reduction in the number of new entrants to the criminal justice system. Although the level of re-offending has increased, it remains below national levels. The proportion of looked after children with final warnings, reprimands and convictions fell in the last year and is well below the national level. Over one thousand young people took part in the positive activities programme in 2005 resulting in a reduction in anti social behaviour in identified "hotspot" areas.

Achieving economic well-being

The services provided by the council make a good contribution to achieving the economic well-being of children and young people. The council has a strategic plan for 14-19 education in place that includes challenging secondary schools to develop alternative curriculum provision, further development of the work-related curriculum and a collaborative project across four secondary schools. Links between the council and the local further education college are developing rapidly. A very high proportion of students enter full-time post-16 education. The results achieved at A level per entry are in line with the national average and are above average for vocational qualifications.

There is a reduction in the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training although the number still remains too high. The council is continuing to address this through an action plan and the re-tendering of all its Connexions contracts. Employment and training for care leavers has continued to increase and is high, and there are also good opportunities for young people with learning disabilities.

The council's management of its services for children and young people, including its capacity to improve them further

The council consulted widely on its CYPP, which sets out a strategic vision for Children's Services and a challenging agenda for change. The plan is based on an analysis of need, identifies gaps in provision and sets clear and ambitious targets for all phases. The self-assessment undertaken for the APA demonstrates very well that the council has a full understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and the strategies required to implement further improvements. The council is committed to developing children's services as

demonstrated through its budget allocation and its decision to structure much of its Local Public Service Agreement 2 targets around improving educational performance, health, youth crime reduction and looked after children.

The senior team is now established and have a shared vision and commitment to improving further the services for children and young people and meeting the challenging targets of the CYPP. The new integrated Children's Services department has increased capacity and is now focusing its efforts on meeting the needs of the whole child. As part of this process, new developments are underway in key areas of provision such as CAMHS and the school improvement service. Although a new IT system to aid the recording and sharing of data about children and their backgrounds is currently being implemented, an integrated approach to tracking individuals has not yet been established.

There is a joint work force strategy being devised for children's services, although currently workforce planning is carried out separately for different professional groups. There are vacancies of some key posts, both in the council and schools, although staff turnover in schools has reduced by nearly a half in the last five years. The council has clear plans in place for both the recruitment and retention of teachers and social care staff. However, there are still high numbers of vacancies in the Referral and Assessment Service.

The strong collaborative working arrangements with a range of partners from the public, voluntary and independent sectors have continued this year. Joint commissioning is well developed across a range of services, alongside pooled budgets. There are clear plans and current developments to strengthen the already well embedded partnerships developed through the Children's Trust.

The performance of the council's services is monitored through frequent management meetings and the Children's Services department undergoes monthly financial monitoring. Budgets have been managed well to reduce overspends, particularly in the budget for placements for looked after children, and transfer monies to prevention and support services. The department is committed to achieving best value for money. Most of the issues identified in last year's APA have been addressed and the council is working effectively towards ensuring the others are met. There has been considerable improvement in a number of areas, for example, foster parent placements and stability for looked after children, external examination results and in ensuring the safety of children and young people. Working collaboratively with its partners, the council has excellent capacity to make further improvements to the services it provides for children and young people.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promoting healthy lifestyles through partnership working • looked after children health checks • teenage conception rates and sustained reductions • schools reaching Level 3 Healthy Schools Standards • school nurse screening • increased MMR immunisation. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a comprehensive CAMHS and improved response times.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • significant improvement through rigorous scrutiny • improved care planning in child protection • CPR numbers halved • increased availability of family support and prevention services • reduced numbers of looked after children • increased availability of family placements • more placement stability. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accurate reporting and monitoring of referral and re-referrals • completing initial assessments, particularly with regard to child protection work • the number of adoptions • transition planning for disabled children.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attainment at Key Stage 2, 3 and 4 • meeting of Key Stage 4 floor targets • removal of two secondary schools from special measures • provision of over 20 hours a week alternative tuition for all permanently excluded pupils • participation of children and young people using the council's services. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attainment in Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics • improving attendance, in particular reducing the level of authorised absence in primary schools • GCSE examination performance of looked after children and some minority ethnic groups.

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the consultation with children and young people across a wide range of services • the involvement of young people in strategic decision making • participation of looked after children in their reviews • declining number of new entrants to the criminal justice system. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reporting to all children and young people the outcomes of their peers' suggestions on improving services.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupils benefit from effective secondary schools • care leavers in employment, education or training (EET) • young people with learning disabilities in EET. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the number of young people not in EET.
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a CYPP that sets out a clear strategic vision and agenda for change • challenging targets for improvement • council's commitment to children's services • strong, collaborative working arrangements with a range of partners • budget planning and control. 	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rationalising the recording and sharing of information about individual children and their families.

Aspects for focus in a future joint area review or the next APA

- The effectiveness of the CAMHS.
- The impact of the authority's actions on raising standards in Key Stage 1 and improving attendance.
- The action of the authority to reduce surplus places in secondary schools.
- The effectiveness of the referral and assessment service.
- The numbers of young people not in education, employment or training.

We confirm that the children's services grade will provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) and will be published to the Audit Commission. The social care judgement is for CSCI information only.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

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JONATHAN PHILLIPS

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