

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456-404045
Email: edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



Making Social Care
Better for People



Ms P Thompson
Chief Executive
London Borough of Hackney
Hackney Town Hall
Mare Street
London
E8 1EA

1 December 2005

Dear Ms Thompson

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

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 27 June to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your 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.

Being healthy

Working relationships between the council and its partners are strong and collaborative working is having some positive effect. However, much remains to be done. For example, whilst the incidence of teenage pregnancy has declined significantly, it is still comparatively very high. In many cases initiatives have been operating for a relatively short time or are still in the planning stages. This having been said, there is already some very positive work on healthy eating and a good healthy schools programme. In these, as in many other respects, the activities of the council and its partners are appropriately targeted at need and have promising prospects of success. Examples are the development of a joint drugs treatment centre, the deployment of health visitors in education and day care settings and improvements in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) support to such settings. However, as yet there is little evidence available of impact in improving the health of children and young people and this is an area for improvement. A higher proportion of looked after children have regular health checks than the average elsewhere.

Staying safe

Performance against a range of quantities measures has continued to improve and remains good. Arrangements for ensuring that the qualitative aspects of child protection work are consistently high are being revised and it is intended that this will provide further evidence of good outcomes. Inter-agency working with the police and

the health service is strong and there is increasingly effective child protection working between the education service (provided by The Learning Trust) and social services.

Most initial assessments are being completed quickly and in the last year more core assessments were done on time, although continued improvement is still needed. More children in need and their families are being helped through preventative support services. Numbers on the Child Protection Register (CPR) have been reduced and this is attributed to the council making it easier and quicker to access support services.

With more children in need being supported within their families, and more risk being managed outside formal child protection procedures, there is a need for the council to ensure that its quality assurance systems demonstrate that these children are being safeguarded effectively.

All children on the CPR have an allocated social worker and all cases are reviewed on time. The numbers of children de-registered increased whilst the numbers re-registered fell. The number of children spending more than two years on the CPR was also further reduced. New Safeguarding Board arrangements have been introduced early with the full engagement and commitment of all the key agencies. Following a high profile trial, a serious case review has been independently commissioned which the authority recognises needs to report promptly and be acted upon speedily.

There is a very effective Safer Schools Programme with focussed work with the police in schools to counter crime. There has been a reduction in the incidence of street crime.

The number of looked after children now remains constant and their placements are more stable than last year. All have an allocated social worker and most looked after children are with foster parents. But many are placed some distance from Hackney and work has started to enable the authority to have better information about their needs. New standards for the care of looked after children are being developed to further improve their life chances. A priority identified by the council is to further increase the educational attainment of these children and the learning trust and social services are working to develop effective protocols.

Whilst children with disabilities and their families are getting more help than before, they do not all have transition plans and person centred planning is not yet consistently implemented for them. The availability of Direct Payments is not sufficiently well promoted to these young people and their families.

There are many placements out of borough, but an insufficiently clear analysis of the individual needs of looked after children to ensure that they have access to all the support they need, wherever they live, to achieve their full potential. There are too few care leavers in employment, education or training.

Enjoying and achieving

The council has a contract with an independent non-profit-making body, the Learning Trust, to provide its educational services.

Pupil performance in schools is generally below the national average, reflecting the high levels of deprivation locally. However, it compares more favourably with performance in similar areas, particularly as children get older. Rates of improvement in recent years have been significantly better than elsewhere in almost all respects at secondary level and in some at primary. A particular feature of performance at the end of Key Stage 4 is the comparatively low proportion of pupils who leave school without any qualifications. There is still significant underachievement by some ethnic groups and by boys in general. This largely reflects the position nationally but is rather worse for Hackney in the case of boys. Measures to address these issues are beginning to have positive effect.

The provision of early years education has improved significantly in recent years and is now satisfactory. The development of joint working with the health service is a particularly positive feature in such respects.

Measures taken to monitor, challenge and support schools to raise standards have improved and are now good. These have largely now won the confidence of the schools themselves and this in itself is a major step forward. Very clear evidence of improved effectiveness can be seen in the numbers of schools in special measures and serious weaknesses. These have reduced significantly from the previously high levels and no schools have come into either category for a considerable period of time.

Attendance at primary and secondary school has improved much faster than the national average in recent years and is now in line with similar areas. Exclusions from school were higher than elsewhere for the last year for which comparisons are available but have since been reduced significantly. Aspects of support for behaviour are good. A comparatively high minority of pupils receive education otherwise than at school because of exclusion. They tend to stay longer in such provision than in other areas and to be reintegrated less frequently into school. However, the alternative provision made for them is satisfactory overall and in some cases good.

The educational achievement of looked after children has improved markedly in recent years and is significantly better than the national average for those achieving 5+ A*-C grades at GCSE. Attendance at school by these young people is also much improved and better than the average elsewhere. Collaborative working between education and social services in such respects is good. Provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities is satisfactory. Where formal assessments of special educational need are required these are almost always completed within acceptable timescales. Effective measures are taken to secure the provision of sufficient school

places and to improve the quality of buildings and facilities. Youth service provision is a weakness.

Making a positive contribution

Support for children's social and emotional development within education and day care provision is satisfactory. Extensive and imaginative measures are taken to seek the views of children and young people, both about their own care and education and about services more generally. More work needs to be done, however, to establish whether young people believe their views are listened to and have a real impact on decision making. Activities aimed at reducing youth offending are having a positive impact, particularly in terms of the levels of repeat offending. There is a good track record of engaging young people at risk of offending in positive activities. Support for such young people who have mental health and/or substance abuse problems has improved. Inter-agency co-operation at a strategic level on youth offending and reducing anti social behaviour more generally is good.

Achieving economic well-being

Inter-agency collaboration to improve educational provision for young people aged 14-19 is good. The establishment of clusters of providers to work together on the development of the 14-19 curriculum is a positive step. Participation in education post 16 is increasing. The exam performance of students in school sixth forms is better than the average in similar areas. A priority need, however, is to continue to improve the provision of basic skills courses in schools and support for key skills more generally within 14-19 provision. Provision for young people with the most complex needs is improving but also requires further development.

A range of positive and imaginative steps are taken to support young people in preparing for working life and to encourage them to have higher aspirations. There are productive links between businesses and schools, with individual mentoring support for young people being a particular feature. There is effective collaboration with the voluntary sector in particular on developing new kinds of programmes for young people who are disaffected with mainstream educational provision. There is evidence of impact in a reduction in the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training. The proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training has also increased. The council's own consultation with young people nonetheless reveals some continuing concerns about the provision of work-related education and training and the quality of careers education and advice.

The provision of day care places has expanded very significantly in recent years and at much faster than the national rate. Some good support has been given to new providers. There are concerns on the part of some teenage parents about the type of

temporary housing accommodation provided for them and a more general concern about the detrimental effects of poor housing on educational achievement.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the promotion of healthy lifestyles for children and young people collaboration with the health service. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> support to reduce the rates of teenage pregnancy.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> collaboration across agencies to safeguard children systems to monitor and review the management of child protection cases increasing accessibility and effectiveness of preventative and support services the placement of looked after children in family care settings. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the proportion of looked after children in care placements outside the borough the analysis of the needs of such children transition to adult services for young people with disabilities.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the rate of improvement in the performance of pupils in schools, particularly secondary schools monitoring, challenge and support for schools generally and for schools with difficulties in particular the rate of improvement in school attendance the educational achievement and school attendance of looked after children. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the comparative achievement of some ethnic groups and of boys generally the youth service.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> measures to seek the views of children and young people on service planning and review inter-agency collaboration to reduce the rate of youth offending and anti social behaviour more generally. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p>

<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inter-agency collaboration to improve education and training provision for 14-19 year olds • links between businesses and schools and measures to encourage and support young people in having high aspirations. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision to enhance the basic skills of low achieving students • educational provision post 16 for students with the most complex needs.
--	---

Service management

The council has good capacity to improve. Leadership, both at political and senior officer level is strong. There is a clear commitment to partnership working and effective steps have been taken to establish productive working relationships with partner agencies. Strategic priorities are shared and are based on a comprehensive analysis of needs. Extensive and imaginative steps have been taken to secure the views of both children and young people and their parents and carers. It is clear that the development of the children and young people plan is taking appropriate account of these views.

The council now has a proven track record of delivering improvement in its services for children and young people. Much remains to be done, since the levels of need are very high and many services are developing from a low base. More work is required to ensure that the commissioning of services is based on a comprehensive audit of needs and gaps in provision. There is also significant scope for moving the deployment of resources further towards the early identification of need and the provision of preventative services. Nonetheless, with such high levels of presenting need, the council is sensible to be relatively cautious in how quickly it moves in such respects. Improvements still need to be made in joint action planning with partner agencies and in coordinating service delivery on the ground. However, unlike the position hitherto, the great majority of improvements are now being sustained and built on year by year. Overall the council and its partners are clearly moving in the right direction.

The strong commitment of elected members and senior officers to delivering high quality services is matched amongst the council's staff more generally. The workforce strategy has been effective in recruiting and retaining key staff in very challenging circumstances. The council's success in such respects in recent years has made a particularly important contribution to delivering and sustaining service improvements. Performance management is now more systematic than it was and there is close monitoring of key performance indicators. However, more work is necessary to move the focus of both monitoring and service planning away from service activity as such to the delivery of improved outcomes for children and young people.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Enjoying and achieving

Action is taken to ensure that educational provision 5-16 is of good quality:

- transition from early years provision to Key Stage 1
- support to raise standards in Key Stage 1
- support for maths and science across the key stages
- support to address underachievement by some ethnic groups and by boys more generally.

Making a positive contribution

Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting the community:

- children and young people's opinions about the action taken to consult and involve them
- whether services have improved as a consequence of involving children and young people
- the success of activity aimed at encouraging and supporting voluntary work by children and young people.

Achieving economic well-being

Action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is planned and delivered in a coordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16-19) is of good quality:

- support for basic skills for underachieving young people
- the quality of both work related learning and careers education and advice.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to achieve economic well-being:

- provision, including transition planning, for young people with complex needs.

Final judgements

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

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS

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

Cc. Mr Bob Morgan, Acting Director of Social Services

CC. Steve Goodman-Assistant Director of Children & Families

APA final judgements 2005: London Borough of Hackney

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	3
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.	3
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	3

1

Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Very good
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good/promising
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate