

17 December 2008

Ms Gillian Palmer
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Greenwich
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Riverside House West
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Dear Ms Palmer

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in the London Borough of Greenwich Council 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	2
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	3
Enjoying and achieving	1
Making a positive contribution	2
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	2

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

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 2

The London Borough of Greenwich delivers services that meet the minimum requirements and almost all outcomes are judged as at least adequate. The management of children's services and the council's capacity to improve are also adequate because the trend of improvement has not been consistent and sustained since the 2007 APA. The rates of exclusions, levels of secondary school attendance, re-offending rates and educational outcomes for looked after children are not improving fast enough. Outcomes for enjoying and achieving are inadequate. For making a positive contribution they are adequate. Although children and young people in school make at least satisfactory progress from their low starting points, standards remain well below national levels. The council has made progress in addressing some of the areas identified for development in the 2007 APA. It is beginning to narrow the gap between outcomes for most children and young people and those who are the most vulnerable. There is evidence of improvement in attendance in primary schools, the attainment of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and a reduction in the number of first time offenders. The council makes a good contribution towards supporting children and young people to be healthy, stay safe and achieve economic well-being.

Being healthy

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.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greenwich has exceeded its target for the number of schools achieving Healthy School status which is above the national average. There has been good progress in increasing the proportion of mothers initiating breast-feeding. It has improved since the 2007 APA from below to well above similar councils. The proportion of health assessments for looked after children is above similar council and national comparators and is very good.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substance misuse related admissions to hospital have increased and are above similar councils. The number of teenage conceptions remains above national levels, although it has fallen since the 2007 APA.

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 for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The council has made significant improvement in increasing the number of looked after children who have been adopted, which is now better than similar councils. ▪ Long term and short term placement stability for looked after children is very good and is better than similar councils and national comparators. ▪ The high level of referrals leading to initial assessments and timely completion of these assessments is above similar councils and national comparators.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportion of looked after children fostered by relatives or friends has remained static since the 2007 APA and is well below national and similar councils levels.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 1

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is inadequate. Although the council has accurately identified most of its strengths and areas for development the overall trend of improvement is variable.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The trend of improvement in standards at Key Stage 1 is well above that of similar councils. ▪ Children and young people make at least satisfactory progress from their low starting points at all key stages. ▪ Attendance in primary schools has improved and is now in line with similar councils and national comparators.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standards in English, mathematics and science at all key stages are well below national levels. ▪ The number of fixed term and permanent exclusions from primary and secondary schools remains higher than nationally. ▪ Attendance in secondary schools is below national and similar council levels. ▪ Outcomes for looked after children are below national and similar council comparators.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 2

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

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is good participation of children and young people in decision making. The number of first time entrants into the youth justice system has fallen since the 2007 APA and is below the level of similar councils. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given specific facilities to communicate their views, for example, through the good use of information and communication technology.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The rate of re-offending has risen and remains above average. This was identified as an area for improvement at the previous APA. The proportion of young offenders in education, employment and training has fallen below national levels since the 2007 APA. The percentage of young offenders undergoing substance misuse screening is below targets for both initial screening and for full assessments being carried out within five days.

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 for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The participation rates of 17-year-olds in education, training and work-based learning has increased and is now above the national level. There has been a significant improvement in the timely success rates for work based learners which is now well above national and similar council levels. Outcomes for care leavers have improved and are good.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although the proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training has fallen since the 2007 APA, levels remain higher than similar council and national comparators, particularly for teenage mothers.

- Fewer young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are in work based learning than nationally.

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

Grade 2

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is adequate and its management of these services is also adequate. Children's services have undergone significant change in the last year, including the appointment of a new Director, a reconfigured management structure and a reorganisation of school improvement services. Self-assessment is used effectively to identify key priorities for improvement, including the need to develop capacity across all service areas. There is a new Children and Young People's Plan which strengthens the links with the local area agreement targets. Some partnership working, for example with the child and adolescent mental health services and through a well organised Local Safeguarding Children Board, is having a positive impact on helping to keep children and young people safe and healthy. More robust performance management and lines of accountability are developing but are not yet having a sustained impact on improving outcomes for children and young people across all service areas, such as youth offending. Although outcomes for enjoying and achieving are inadequate, unvalidated data for 2008 indicate improvement.

Major strengths

- New leadership and a reconfigured management structure is clearly focused on securing more direct accountability, greater integration of children's services and the need to put improving outcomes for children and young people at the heart of the council's service delivery.
- Elected members have identified clear priorities for improvement. Links between strategic planning and the local area agreement targets have been strengthened.

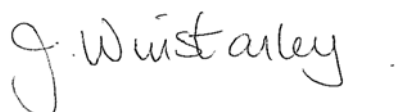
Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Recently strengthened performance management structures are not yet having a sustained impact on improving outcomes across all service areas and fully addressing weaknesses identified in the 2007 APA.
- Spending on services for looked after children is high and is not resulting in consistently improved outcomes for these young people.

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