

26 November 2007

Mr Paul Burnett
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Greenwich
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Riverside House
Woolwich High Street
Woolwich
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Dear Mr Burnett

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

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment for your local authority. The judgements in the letter draw on your review of the Children and Young People's Plan, your action plan arising from the joint area review and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted, other inspectorates and relevant bodies. The letter comments on progress since the recent joint area review. 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.

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 3

Greenwich Council consistently delivers above minimum requirements and continues to make a good contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people in most service functions across the five outcome areas. It makes a good contribution towards supporting children and young people to being healthy, staying safe, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being. Outcomes for enjoying and achieving are adequate, although there is clear evidence of improvement in some areas, including the improved educational attainment of looked after children and improved Foundation Stage profile. In the short time since the joint area review, the council has responded positively to the recommendations identified and has made good progress in addressing them. The council's overall capacity to improve continues to be good with a strong commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people in Greenwich.

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 aspect is good. One recommendation emerged from the joint area review.

For action in the next six months

- The designated doctor for children who are looked after should ensure that the systems and practices for assessing and meeting the health needs of looked after children living outside of the borough are sufficiently robust.

Appropriate interim arrangements are in place to cover the designated doctor vacancy and good progress is being made in improving the health assessments for looked after children, including those outside the borough.

Parents and carers receive good support to keep children healthy. Infant mortality rates and the number of mothers smoking during pregnancy have fallen and are below the national average. Breast-feeding initiation has risen and is close to the national average. However, immunisation rates are below the national average and the perinatal mortality rate is above the national level. The council has appropriate strategies to improve performance in these areas.

There is strong focus on promoting healthy lifestyles for children and young people through the Healthy Schools Programme. Schools are well engaged and those achieving the National Healthy Schools Status exceed the national average. More Greenwich schools inspected were judged as good or better in helping children to be healthy than in similar authorities. More children and young people than nationally think that they get good information and advice on healthy lifestyles.

Reducing teenage pregnancy is a significant challenge for the council. Although the number of conceptions amongst 15-17 year olds fell, it remains well above the benchmark average and the national average. In response the authority has reviewed its strategy, realigned services and is monitoring performance systematically. Multi-agency strategies on sexual health and HIV strategies have been implemented and a target for the new Chlamydia screening programme has been set.

Agencies are increasingly successful in getting young people into treatment for substance misuse. Hospital admissions have improved and are better than the national average as a result of effective measures in place to ensure appropriate early intervention. The council has set ambitious new targets to reduce substance misuse, smoking and alcohol consumption amongst young people and has realigned services to support this aim.

Physical health is promoted well through the School Sports Partnership and the good links with the School Travel Plan co-ordinator and leisure departments. Oral health of children is good.

Good progress has been made towards achieving a comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), including for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Access to specialist services is timely and waiting times for young people with non-acute mental health needs are better than the national averages.

The frequency of health checks for looked after children and young people are in line with the national average and continues to be rated good. The health needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well met through early access to a range of multi-disciplinary assessment services. There is an increasing range of suitable services for children from Black and minority ethnic groups.

Areas for development

- Reduce the number of conceptions amongst 15-17 year olds.

Staying safe

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. One recommendation emerged from the joint area review.

For immediate action

- The Director of Children's Services should take the necessary action to ensure that initial assessments are completed within the required timescale.

The council has made significant progress in addressing the above recommendation despite a higher number of referrals leading to initial assessment than local and national comparators. Sixty five percent of initial assessments have been completed within the required timescale. This is above local comparator but below the national average. However, more recent council data indicate a continuing trend towards closing the gap. There is also good performance in completing core assessments within the required timescales.

The council has worked well with its partners to improve the safety of children in the borough. For example, successful action has reduced by 70% the number of children killed or seriously injured through road traffic accidents. Evidence from the inspection of schools presents staying safe as a strong aspect across all phases with the majority of schools judged as good or better. Similarly evidence from the inspection of early years provision shows that most settings contribute very well to the safety of

young children. The Tellus2 survey indicates that children's sense of safety in school is higher than the national average, but is below regarding their sense of safety in their community.

The rate of domestic violence in the borough is high and children are disproportionately victims of crime. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) indicates that the borough is taking these issues seriously and collaborative action with the police is in place to encourage better reporting of domestic violence and crimes against children. Effective systems are in place for monitoring safeguarding arrangements to protect children.

The Greenwich Safeguarding Children Board meets regularly and meetings are well attended by the network. Joint training and improved partnership working have resulted in all partners having an understanding of the area's priorities and their responsibilities. Helpful information about safeguarding is available to children, young people and their parents. The Common Assessment Framework and lead professional role have been piloted and evaluated. Implementation across the borough is being progressed.

The number of children on the child protection register has fallen to below local comparators but is above the national average. Re-registration and de-registration have reduced; the council's performance is rated good. All children on the child protection register have an allocated social worker and all cases are reviewed within the required timescale.

The number of looked after children and young people remains high. A large proportion is placed outside the borough, although many are in adjoining local authority areas. The timeliness of reviews is good. The stability of short term placement is strong. Longer term placement stability is improving but is below the national average.

The rate of adoption is now acceptable. However, the percentage of those adopted within 12 months from the best interest decision has fallen. The majority of looked after children are placed with foster carers and there has been success in recruiting new foster carers. All looked after children and young people have a named qualified social worker. The percentage of eligible young people leaving care who have a pathway plan has improved and is now close to the national average. Those who are eligible and have an allocated personal advisor has also improved and is above the national level. The percentage of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who have transition plans remains static at up to 75%.

Areas for development

- Reduce reliance on out-of-borough placements for looked after children and young people.
- Improve the long term stability of placement of looked after children and young people.

Enjoying and achieving

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 aspect is adequate. One recommendation emerged from the joint area review.

For immediate action

- The Director of Children's Services should reduce the incidents of permanent and fixed-term exclusions and extend preventative strategies in primary schools.

In 2006 there was a fall in the level of permanent exclusions from secondary schools, although it remains well above national levels, and there was a 2.6% increase in the level of fixed-term exclusions from secondary schools. Exclusions in primary schools are above national levels and the percentage of fixed-term exclusions from special schools rose in 2005 by 20% to well above national levels. The council has canvassed children and young people's views who feel that exclusions should be used less. It has robustly challenged three secondary schools with the highest level of exclusions resulting in a reduction in exclusions from these schools. Reducing exclusions is a key priority in the Children and Young People's Plan. A hard-to-place protocol with secondary schools and an agreement with special schools not to permanently exclude any pupil are in place. Pupil Placement Panels for primary and secondary schools and a Key Stage 3 support centre are established. A primary support team is being developed. Work with schools has focused on preventative measures through early engagement with support services for pupils at risk of exclusions. Council data for 2006/07 indicate that these measures are beginning to have an impact with the level of exclusions halved in primary schools and no exclusions from special schools.

An assessment centre and multi-agency steering group identifies and monitors the needs of pupils missing school. There has been an 8% increase in the provision of alternative tuition for permanently excluded pupils which is similar to the national level.

Attendance levels in primary and secondary schools are broadly in line with national levels. However, unauthorised absence rose in 2006 and is very high compared to national levels. Absence rates of looked after children have also increased and are above national levels. A protocol has been agreed with Safer Schools to increase visits to families and the Persistent Absence initiative is being extended to more schools.

The council has given a high priority to early years provision and there has been an improvement in the results of the Foundation Stage profile which places the council in the top quartile for progress. However, children's development levels at the end of

the Foundation Stage are below national levels. In Children's Act and Nursery inspections the percentage judged as outstanding for enjoying and achieving is higher than nationally. Good quality training is being provided to raise development levels in the Foundation Stage further.

Although standards of attainment are well below the national level at all Key Stages pupils make satisfactory progress from Key Stage 1 to 3. They make better than expected progress in Key Stage 4, based on their prior attainment. The trend of improvement over time has been well above the national average at Key Stage 1 but in line for Key Stages 2 and 3, except for English at Key Stage 3 which is better. Results improved in 2006 at Key Stages 2 and 3 but fell at Key Stage 1. The percentage of pupils attaining at least one GCSE rose in 2006, although the percentage achieving GCSE A*- C grades fell and is well below national levels. A higher proportion of schools than nationally achieve below 30% A*- C grades. Educational outcomes for looked after children and young people have improved. The percentage attaining at least one GCSE and the proportion attaining 5 or more A*- C grades have increased and are above national levels. In the Tellus2 survey the majority of pupils said they enjoyed school.

The local authority provides a robust challenge to schools identified as causing concern. Following inspection, no schools have been judged to require special measures but the proportion given a notice to improve is higher than found nationally, although this has now reduced to two and is in line with national levels. The council, with support from the National Strategies, has identified the need to provide more systematic support and challenge to all schools to raise standards and is taking radical action through the reorganisation of the school improvement service to address this.

Schools responded in the schools survey that the council's support for minority ethnic, Traveller and refugee families is good. Inspection evidence identifies that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress.

Areas for development

- Reduce the level of exclusions in primary, secondary and special schools.
- Reduce the levels of unauthorised absence in primary and secondary schools.
- Raise levels of attainment at all Key Stages.

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. One recommendation emerged from the joint area review.

For action in the longer term

- The council and its partners should ensure that children and young people are well informed about services, have good access to advice and guidance and are given good opportunities to contribute their views on the changes that are taking place in Greenwich through regeneration initiatives.

The council has made good progress in implementing this recommendation. The Children and Young People's Plan includes action to increase young people's participation in regeneration initiatives including the ambitious modernisation programme for schools. A children and young people's participation strategy has been agreed and a detailed action plan is being implemented. There is on-going work to enhance the effectiveness of school councils and links with the well-established youth participation structures in the borough are used to inform both strategic and service planning.

Consultation has taken place with young people on the design of schools, on extended school activities on local estates and a range of exit interviews were undertaken with looked after children, to test out how they felt about the services that they received. Children and young people have been involved in making decisions about how grants were dispersed and on the use of funding. There has also been work to engage young people in the work of the Olympic Unit, which is central to the regeneration programme for the area. The council is committed to an agenda to encourage aspiration amongst children and young people through engaging them in decision-making.

Data shows an increase in the percentage of young people aged 13-19 reached by publicly funded youth service, although this remains below the national average. The Tellus2 survey indicates that the percentage of young people in Greenwich who give their views about local problems, activities and facilities is higher than the national average. Good work is done by schools and the youth service to target vulnerable groups and improve their inclusion. Equality, diversity and inclusion are promoted well, although in some provision the diversity of the population is not reflected and not all young people are aware of the forums that are operating in their area.

There is good engagement of young people in partnership work to tackle anti-social behaviour and youth crime. The Positive Activities and Safer School programmes have been effective in reducing anti-social behaviour within the areas that they operate. The youth service and the youth offending team are successful in engaging young people in preventative and diversionary projects and are having a positive impact, particularly in reducing the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system. The number of new entrants to the youth justice system continued to fall, with the last quarter seeing a fall from 71 to 31. The percentage of looked after children and young people who have been given final warnings or convicted is below the national average. However, in contrast the rate of recidivism has increased and is above the national average.

Looked after children and young people have good opportunities to make a positive contribution and have their views heard. Participation of looked after children in decision-making about their own lives and in service development has risen and is rated acceptable. Council data for 2006/07 indicate that there is a continuing trend of improvement.

Area for development

- Reduce levels of recidivism.

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. One recommendation emerged from the joint area review.

For action in the next six months

- The Director of Children's Services should further reduce and target support for young people who are not in education, employment or training.

Good progress has been made in targeting support for young people to reduce the proportion who are not in education, employment or training. Although levels have fallen by 0.2% for 16-18 year olds and by 2.6% for 19 year olds, they remain above national levels by over 4% for both groups. The percentage of 16-19 year old with learning difficulties and/or disabilities not in education, employment or training has also reduced but remains above national levels. The Connexions target for those not in education, employment or training for November 2006 was met. In terms of children and young people not in education, employment or training, there is a detailed strategy and action plan in place involving all providers and focusing on preventative work such as a Key Stage 4 engagement programme funded by the Learning and Skills Council. This one year programme has been targeted at Year 10 and 11 pupils and includes a two day vocational element. The council has also developed a specific programme for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who are not in education, employment or training, building on best practice from other boroughs. The proportion of 19 year olds whose current activity is unknown is below national levels and fewer than nationally are joining the not in education, employment or training group. The percentage of 16-18 year olds whose current activity is not known has risen and is above the national level although the percentage joining the not in education, employment or training group has fallen below the national level. More recent data indicate that there is a continuing reduction in children and young people not in education, employment or training and the proportion of young people whose current activity is unknown has fallen. The percentage of looked after children who are in education, employment or training at

age 19 and the proportion of care leavers in suitable accommodation are similar to national levels.

Provision for childcare places has grown faster than nationally and the extended schools programme is above national levels and has exceeded locally set targets. Almost 90% of families in the most disadvantaged areas of the borough with children aged three and four have taken up the early education grant and a Work for Families pilot has been established for lone parents offering a single point of advice and support through children's centres. Schools surveyed say they feel the advice and support from local services for pupils beyond school is good.

Levels of attainment for 16-19 year olds remain below national levels although the proportion of young people achieving Level 1, 2 and 3 qualifications has increased and young people make good progress from their low starting point by the age of 16. There has been an increase above national levels in the participation rates of 16 and 17 year olds in full-time education as a result of successful targeting of resources at low participation areas within the borough. There has also been a significant increase in the percentage of young people completing apprenticeships which is almost double the national level. A good youth service contributes well to the achievements of young people.

The 14-19 strategy has a high profile within the authority with all key players involved in the 14-19 Partnership Group. A strong culture of collaboration is evident in the G Plus vocational learning network involving post 16 providers. There has been good achievement in producing partnership guidelines, a common timetable, shared curriculum, data sharing and high quality publications. Young people surveyed feel the breadth of the post 16 curriculum offer is good and recruitment to 14-19 courses within the borough has almost doubled in the past four years. Young apprenticeship programmes in sport and performing arts are well established and attendance levels are good at 96%. The diploma bids were well supported by schools and firmly linked to local priorities. One bid was successful in creative media and there is a well-developed rolling programme of further diploma developments involving increased employer involvement. A forum has been established to develop employment opportunities in the public sector. The Education Business Partnership is active with good levels of engagement. Courses in office skills, catering and retail are targeted to increase employability of young people with few or no qualifications. There is an extensive regeneration programme in progress linked to the Olympics in 2012 and the council has secured significant provision for new and affordable housing. However, the impact of these positive initiatives on improved outcomes is not fully evident yet.

Area for development

- The recommendation from the joint area review remains relevant.
- Raise levels of attainment for 16-19 year olds.

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

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is good, and its management of these services is good. One recommendation emerged from the joint area review.

For action in the next six months

- The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership should ensure that targets in individual performance review and development plans are specific and measurable.

Plans have been amended appropriately in light of the joint area review recommendations and now include targets which are specific and measurable. Performance indicators have been strengthened and data are analysed regularly to identify gaps in services. Individual performance targets are specifically linked to service and strategic plans and this is now being developed with other partnership agencies. The council has a clear vision, is ambitious and is prepared to be innovative, as demonstrated in its Children's Trust Pathfinder status and the piloting of a virtual headteacher for looked after children. As a result of strong leadership and analysis of rigorous monitoring, the council has set up a number of important initiatives to further improve outcomes for children and young people across all services further. A scrutiny panel involving representatives from the Young People's Council and the Children's Trust Board monitor the progress of the CYPP. Planning and review groups for each outcome area monitor its progress and assess its impact.

The review of the Children and Young People's Plan is clearly structured and demonstrates a good understanding of the needs of local communities, including those of the most vulnerable groups. There is considerable evidence of a positive trend of improvements in outcomes. For example, good progress has been made in reducing tribunal activity and achieving 100% of statements processed within the expected timeframe. Educational outcomes for looked after children and young people have improved and are above national levels, levels of smoking during pregnancy have fallen to below national levels and the healthy schools target has been exceeded. The CYPP review accurately acknowledges that continuing to raise attainment and reducing the number of children and young people not in education, employment or training, exclusions and levels of teenage pregnancy further, remain priorities for improvement. These are clearly identified in the CYPP and supported by well-targeted resources. Strategic planning is based on effective needs analysis, wide consultation and good partnership working, including with the Primary Care Trust. Schools surveyed judge the council's effectiveness in consultation and communication with them in the development of the CYPP as good. Financial management is sound. Neighbourhood Renewal funding has been targeted appropriately and resources have been redirected from high cost placements of looked after children to supporting placements with friends and family.

A workforce strategy is in place and is being implemented to address recruitment, retention and training issues. Retention of social care staff has improved and vacancies remain low compared to national levels. There has been a significant increase, well above national levels, in the qualifications achieved by social workers and managers. The local authority has identified improving leadership within schools as an important priority and is taking appropriate and timely action in this respect. Plans are progressing to fill vacancies with substantive senior manager appointments within the Children's Services.

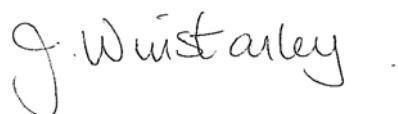
Area for development

- Develop a skilled and stable workforce in schools and the school improvement service to raise standards and sustain improvement.

Overall, the council has demonstrated good progress in meeting the joint area review recommendations, and has shown good capacity to maintain and improve further its services for children and 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.

Yours sincerely

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

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection