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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Mr Dunkley

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

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 awarded¹
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.	4

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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

East Sussex County Council consistently delivers services above the minimum requirements for children and young people. The majority of services are performing well. There is very good partnership working. The Children's and Young People's Plan (CYPP) clearly describes a shared vision which is supported by strategic goals that are driven by needs of those it aims to serve.

All of the recommendations from last year's APA have been subject to carefully targeted action and progress has been reviewed regularly. East Sussex has a clear and precise knowledge of what it does well and where it could improve. It has been proactive in devising strategies that involve multi-team working to support children, young people and their families. The council has excellent capacity to improve its services further.

Being healthy

The council makes a good contribution to the health of children and young people and gives effective support to parents. There are strong relationships with health colleagues and there are good examples of the effectiveness of these partnerships at strategic and operational levels. These include health equity audits, universal health screening for all children, enhanced visiting protocols for targeting vulnerable groups and the delivery of health education to travellers and asylum seeker families. The Family Support Strategy provides parenting education programmes in conjunction with voluntary agencies.

The council works well with health partners to provide young people with effective advice and information to reduce teenage pregnancies. In secondary schools the school nurses proactively support the personal, social and health education of pupils. Positive work with young mothers helps to ensure they return to education, employment and training. There are designated midwives and a health coordinator for vulnerable teenage parents to be. The rate of teenage conceptions is decreasing although it is not reducing as quickly as national averages. The council has targeted 'hotspots' effectively and is extending this programme to the towns along the south coastal strip.

The healthy schools programme is extensive with 88% of schools participating, 51% of them have already achieved the Healthy Schools Award. The county wide multi-disciplinary under 19 substance misuse service was cited as a model of good practice by the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse and the Government Office of the South East. The service has specialist practitioners within the youth offending team, care leavers service and pupil referral units.

There have been improvements to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The appointment of key personnel has reduced waiting times. Rates of acute referrals are similar to national figures but non-acute referrals are higher. Resources within CAMHS have been expanded with the Mental Health Trust confident it is now meeting the demands placed on it. The service is now effectively addressing the needs

of young people with severe disabilities and those with needs within the autistic spectrum. Specialist workers are now in place.

There is a county-wide family intensive support service for children with disabilities and their families and Sorrel Drive provides a one stop shop for assessment, which includes access to social workers, occupational therapists and psychologists. Effective working protocols and systems ensure a smooth transfer between children and adult social care services all young people have transition plans in place.

The health needs of looked after children continue to be met at a high level with performance being consistently above national averages for the last five years. These children contribute to the planning and effectiveness of services around health through participation in discussion groups and healthy care audits.

The Children Service Authority's (CSA) performance in its residential, fostering and adoption services in relation to health matters is very good. All issues raised in the annual performance letter of last year have been addressed and improvements made.

Staying safe

The council makes an excellent contribution to the safety of children and young people with members taking seriously their corporate parenting role in relation to looked after children. Good working relationships exist between partners resulting in the successful delivery of a wide range of services. Comprehensive policies and guidance on health and safety matters have been issued to schools and managers, supported by training for staff.

There is a comprehensive range of initiatives to support children and young people at risk of being bullied and to reduce the incidences of bullying. The anti-bullying caseworker provides advice, information and support to individual victims and the team provides schools with a range of anti-bullying initiatives. The traveller education service works with the council's strategic lead officer to address racism and prejudice experienced by travellers. There is a strong focus on building personal resilience for black and minority ethnic (BME) young people and CSA run a comprehensive mandatory training course for all staff and foster carers to build up their awareness, understanding and sensitivity. The children and young people have produced a film called One of Us and this has been turned into a training resource and used in schools within the citizenship curriculum.

Domestic violence issues are given a high priority in the CYPP and the domestic violence panels target prolific offenders and are contributing to a reduction in re-offending.

The development of the local partnerships for children has improved inter-agency support to families and this has built on the success of the Children Index and common assessment framework, which is being developed. A range of preventative work exists.

The use of family group conferences is being expanded to assist families with problem solving and in obtaining help from wider networks of family and friends. Additional resources are being used to support new service development through partnership with voluntary organisations to monitor and support private fostering arrangements. Referral, assessment, planning and review arrangements for children in need are effective and performance is good. Performance in this area is better than national averages.

Complaints are taken seriously and there is an effective complaints system with a dedicated officer for children and families. This is easily accessed by children and young people with advocacy support routinely available. Complaints against staff are robustly investigated and the education safeguarding officer is involved in all allegations against school staff.

Child protection procedures are of a high standard. All schools have designated child protection teachers and network groups are being established. Similarly, there are named nurses and doctors in all health care settings. All child protection work is allocated to professionally qualified social workers and all reviews undertaken in a timely manner. Performance in this area is excellent. All staff employed to work with children and young people go through proper employment and Criminal Record Bureau checks.

The number of children on the Child Protection Register continues to be low although re-registration has increased this year. The council has recognised that support to families with complex and challenging needs, following de-registration, should be strengthened and have taken steps to address this issue.

Parents, carers, children and young people are routinely invited to attend conferences and their attendance is improving. Feedback forms for conference participants are being piloted. Children's attendance at reviews is less common although their views are sought in other ways, and the council's performance in this area is good.

There are excellent services for looked after children with a range of good quality residential, fostering and adoption services available. The number of looked after children is steady. Support to placements within the wider family network and the use of these kinship placements has had a positive impact. There has been a net increase in all types of foster care thereby increasing the range of carers and this has improved matching processes with feedback from young people positively confirming this. There has been an important increase in BME carers, which was noted as an area for development last year. Young people are involved in the delivery of the foster carer's training programme.

The CSA are committed to 'permanence' for young people. Stability of placements for children and young people is excellent but performance in the long-term stability of placements has slightly dropped this year. Some 17% of looked after children are

allocated to unqualified social workers with overall responsibility being held by the supervising senior practitioner. It would be preferable if the council could evidence a formalised system for allocating cases to unqualified social workers that can demonstrate that children are being supported as safely as possible and can show that staff are clear about how the council makes these decisions.

Where difficulties in performance in a children's home have been identified through regulation inspections, the council has taken appropriate action to address shortfalls and strengthen management arrangements. Care leavers' progress is monitored through the extensive use of pathway plans and the allocation of a personal adviser. This is an excellent area of practice.

There are specialist duty and assessment and safeguarding board sub-groups to focus on the needs of children with disabilities. Support for carers of children with disabilities is a priority for the council and carers' assessments are carried out routinely and direct payments used appropriately. The Commission for Social Care inspections rate short break residential services highly. Xpress Advocacy regularly meets with children receiving short breaks to highlight areas of concern or good practice. Children are encouraged and supported to contribute to their reviews.

Enjoying and achieving

The council makes a good contribution towards the enjoyment and achievement of children and young people, including vulnerable, minority ethnic and other groups.

Quality and standards in all key stages have improved. Early years provision and the Foundation Stage are generally at least satisfactory and a significant number of providers are good or better. Standards in Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics are in line with those seen nationally, but are below those of similar councils. Rates of improvement have been smoother and greater in mathematics compared with reading and writing over the last three years. In Key Stage 2 standards in English and mathematics are average and for science they are slightly below. There is a similar picture at Key Stage 3 except that standards in science are below those seen nationally and those of statistical neighbours. The council is working to improve these figures. Results at GCSE are now in line with those seen nationally and for similar councils.

The proportion of children and young people with statements of special educational needs remains average. Although the number of children placed in special schools is still higher than average the number is falling compared with a static national picture.

Attendance has improved significantly, particularly in key areas. Overall attendance is now satisfactory and reductions in authorised attendance continue to be maintained. Unauthorised absences are still too high although this is mainly due to the robust

reporting procedures by schools and a strong stance of not authorising holidays in term time.

The proportion of schools placed in special categories continues to fall and they are removed in good time following effective support. Pupils' behaviour has also improved with fewer days lost through fixed term exclusions. The figure for permanent exclusions is now average. Half of these pupils are reintegrated back into mainstream school, with a consequent reduction in the average time excluded pupils are without provision.

Pupils made significantly better progress than was expected between all key stages in 2005. Improvement trends for achievement and standards are at least in line with statistical neighbours and national averages and are frequently above. The council has continued to close the gap between itself and similar councils. It provides a sophisticated analysis covering precise information on the performance of different geographical areas, individual schools and particular groups of pupils. This helps the identification of pupils vulnerable to underachievement and the effective targeting of schools that need additional support. Resources are sensibly focused on those schools where the largest gains are likely to be made and interventions are adding measurable value. The local authority is not complacent; an example is the proactive and planned approach of its new focus on targeting 'coasting' schools.

Although the achievements of those pupils who are eligible for free school meals is not yet in line with those seen nationally, most of these pupils are making good progress, with value added rising each year since 2003.

Completion of statutory assessments compares extremely favourably with national data. The authority is trailblazing a system for identifying, referring and tracking children and young people. There is a strong focus in creating a joined-up children service delivered through Children's Trust arrangements. In recognition of its good support and raised achievements of looked after children, the council has been invited to take part in a national research project to provide other councils with advice and experience.

Making a positive contribution

The council makes an excellent contribution in this area.

There is an integral commitment to the involvement of children and young people in shaping the services provided to them and influencing the county council. They take an active part in the appointment of key personnel, they are widely consulted and their views are taken seriously and are acted upon wherever possible. Children and young people have responded to this extremely well. They demonstrate a great willingness to be involved, because the council makes it easy for them and they can see that they are making a notable difference in key areas. Consultation is seen as priority throughout all

services, and is extensive, at four key levels: countywide, specialised service developments, local service development and individual. In the latter a key focus is on agreeing manageable goals with children, young people and their families, based on an agreed analysis of their needs. This reinforces the highly effective partnership working and innovative use of funds that provides the best value delivered in partnership with voluntary, maintained and private sectors.

The council is innovative; a good example of this is the new development to include an advocacy service for those children and young people who are terminally ill to ensure they have a voice in decisions about their care. It is also a leading authority for information sharing with the largest electronic Child Index in the country. This is used by over fifty services and teams developing 22 Local Partnerships for Children, devolving decision-making and resources. This has been highly commended by the Audit Commission and has been widely externally evaluated.

The rate of final warnings, reprimands and convictions of looked after children has reduced and is now in line with the national rate and that of similar councils. They are now given more support at both the reprimand and pre-reprimand stages with the highly successful restorative justice programme being extended from residential homes to teenage foster placements. The proportion of looked after children who participated in statutory reviews has increased and is now well above both the national average and that of similar councils.

Achieving economic well-being

The contribution made by the authority in improving the economic well being of children and young people is now good and much better than at the last APA.

The council has good relations with a wide variety of partners and works effectively to improve outcomes for children and young people. This collaborative approach efficiently supports developments through all age ranges; from Sure Start and children's centres, reaching the 20% most deprived communities, to the new 14 - 19 partnerships. There is below average A-level achievement in some schools. But the action taken in the last year to improve post-16 provision and the networks established with various providers demonstrate a commitment to improve and an excellent capacity for doing so. The 14-19 Strategy has had a particular focus on ensuring that appropriate vocational courses, work related learning and work experience opportunities are available to all pupils. Innovative approaches include the provision made by Wealden Skills Centre and Hastings Routeways.

Young people are well prepared for working life. Early identification and interventions in primary schools are made for those who are most vulnerable. The good work done in supporting young people in their transition to working life or further education also helps them to develop good workplace skills that contribute to their future economic well being.

A much greater proportion of care leavers at 19 are living in suitable accommodation compared with national data. The training employment and care statistics for these young people also compare very favourably against national benchmarks.

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

Service management and capacity to improve are excellent across children's services. A new CSA was created early in 2005 with the director and senior management team being appointed during the summer of 2005. The senior team is providing clear and effective management and leadership. There is a strong coherent strategy for implementing the change agenda to ensure that the council is able to work with its partners to provide an effective service for children and young people and create a children's trust.

The council is committed to involving children and young people in policy development and have used a variety of ways to consult and engage with them and participation is high. The council and its partners have also carried out extensive consultation with families, other agencies and council staff to ascertain their views. They have used this consultation to create a CYPP that effectively tackles local issues. Feedback from consultation groups has been very positive and there is high commitment to making changes to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Community engagement has played a key part in agreeing shared investment priorities. The Connecting Communities Programme is supported by nine public authorities along with the voluntary BME community organisation Sompriti, which works across all of East Sussex, focusing on engaging with BME communities and establishing need. Information collected through a recent needs analysis has provided important information about gaps in service. This has shown that there are particular areas that need strengthening to support young people with dual heritage.

The strategic priorities identified within the council plan, the CYPP and the local area agreement are supported by detailed individual plans which include measurable targets and specific timescales. The council plan contains six strategic objectives specifically for children's services and progress against these targets is reported quarterly and monitored closely by members. Three lead members within the CSA work closely with officers and provide effective political support and governance.

The CSA has an extensive knowledge of schools and robustly challenges poor performance and actively supports schools in raising standards. The council has a long-standing track record for vigorous performance management, which is embedded within the culture of the organisation. All heads of service engage in performance management and not just performance monitoring. The basis of all target setting is to

achieve better outcomes for children and there are many examples of performance targets being exceeded as a result of effective action.

A strength of East Sussex is the quality and detail of its mapping, user surveys and analysis of need. KITES is a comprehensive information database accessible to both the professional and public sectors on the range of services available. It is extensively used with 100% of user feedback indicating a high level of satisfaction. As part of its work KITES is continually adding to its database to provide up-to-date information on all services of relevance to children, young people and families throughout the county provided by the public, independent and voluntary sectors. Information from users is being analysed to identify gaps in service.

The council has a policy of recruiting local people into social work posts and then supporting suitable staff to undertake social work training. This approach is showing success with a growing number of social care workers successfully attaining social work qualifications each year, boosting the number of qualified social workers in the council and enabling the council to cover natural turnover of staff thus keeping vacancies low. The council operates a similar policy in its educational services by offering management training and leadership development to encourage local deputy heads to develop the skills needed to undertake the role of head teacher. This has meant East Sussex is able to offer career opportunities to its committed workforce and provide stability of management.

The council has strong financial planning and management in place and has set a sustainable budget for the next three years. There have been changes to the base budgets to reflect true costs and the financial plan is based on known cash limits. This avoids the annual bidding process making it easier to create imaginative ways of using resources more effectively, for example by providing support for kinship care placements. The council effectively uses other sources of funding such as the Children's Fund to deliver services in partnership with the voluntary and independent sectors.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family intensive support service for children with disabilities • multi-agency substance misuse service for under 19 year olds • health checks of looked after children • analysis of BME audit to inform delivery of services • expansion and re-provisioning of CAMHS services. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teenage pregnancies in specific geographical areas • emotional support to dual heritage young people • support to parents of children from dual heritage backgrounds to develop parenting skills.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • excellent child protection systems • excellent services for looked after children • increase in foster placements including BME • raising awareness of issues affecting travellers, gypsies and asylum seekers • anti-bullying strategy, informed by consulting with young people. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of qualified and unqualified staff in management of looked after children in long-term secure placements.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved school improvement services • making use of data to identify areas for improvement • integrated support for looked after children to improve educational achievements • improved educational achievements for looked after children. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • level of unauthorised absences in both primary and secondary schools • achievements of specific groups such as pupils entitled to free school meals and achievements in specific geographical areas at all key stages • standards in science at Key Stages 2 and 3 • below average A-level achievement in some schools.

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proportion of looked after children who communicated their views at the statutory review • council's approach to consulting and involving young people • support for young people with severe disabilities to participate in their reviews • appointment of an equalities officer • rate of final warnings, reprimands and convictions of looked after children. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progression of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to post-16 education and training • collaboration between the local authority and local Learning and Skills Council in developing strategies for improving post-16 education and training • partnership working to improve education and training opportunities • improvements in number of care leavers in education, employment and training. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to appropriate post-16 provision in specific areas.

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

- CAMHS – assessment of non-acute referrals and the impact of the service for young people with learning disabilities.
- Progress on performance of children's centres in relation to prevention and early intervention strategy.
- The impact of the developments in 14-19 provision.
- The level of unauthorised absences in both primary and secondary schools.
- Achievements in all key stages of pupils: who are entitled to free school meals; in specific geographical areas; in science.

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 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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