



Making Social Care  
Better for People



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**1 November 2006**

Dear Mr Archibald

**2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF EALING**

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 <sup>1</sup>
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

<sup>1</sup>

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 services which the London Borough of Ealing provides for its children and young people are consistently above minimum requirements. There is a clear track record of improvement in all areas of its work and in most Ealing performs better than comparable authorities. The authority works well with its partners to make sure that services are appropriately targeted at those who need them most, and in response to consultations with young people, seeks to deliver them in a coordinated, seamless way. There has been a concerted effort to tackle areas of weakness identified in last year's APA and there are clear signs of improvement. For example, the numbers of Asian young women participating in sporting activities have increased and the speed of health assessments for looked after children has improved. As shown in its self assessment, Ealing is an authority that knows its strengths and weaknesses well. It has been clear in sharing its successes, priorities and plans for further improvement in its comprehensive and well argued Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). There is a clear commitment to improvement from all stakeholders and elected members. Appropriate and sometimes innovative strategies have been devised to take the good work forward. Ealing has an excellent capacity to improve its services further.

## **Being healthy**

The authority makes a good contribution towards improving the health of children and young people and takes good account of their views. Outcomes of extensive consultations have been reflected in the CYPP. The authority works closely with health partners and is considering pooled budgets for the jointly planned and commissioned Integrated Service for Children with Disabilities, the Children's Centre Strategy, and the Substance Misuse Strategy. A review of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) as reported in the last APA has been completed. The review resulted in a redesigned four-tier service and progress is being achieved. A pilot project is planned to start in September in Southall, as part of the Vulnerable Children's Service. This will provide a multi-disciplinary single point of contact for children who require less intensive CAMHS services.

Looked after children who received an annual health assessment has positively increased by nearly 10 percentage points since the last APA. A dedicated nurse for looked after children visits children, young people and their carers placed both in and out of the borough, enabling more provision of health advice. Teenage conception rates continue to be lower than in comparable authorities and the national average. All the 30 schools inspected in the past three years provided good, very good or excellent sex and relationships education. The healthy schools award has been achieved by 81% of the target group.

A high proportion of schools were judged to be good or very good in promoting participation in sport and there is a high level of engagement from minority ethnic groups.

Despite these good aspects, there are areas where more improvement is needed. Although better than comparable authorities, the Youth Offending Team (YOT) did not reach the national target for the referral of young people with acute mental difficulties to CAMHS. This was identified by the authority as a resource issue and a full-time worker took up post in June 2006. In addition, performance in delivering timely specialist

assessments to young offenders with identified substance misuse problems has not been consistent. The authority has taken appropriate steps to address this and contracted a new provider from April 2006. Monitoring since then has shown a positive change in waiting times for assessments.

## **Staying safe**

Child protection and the work of the Safeguarding Board continue to be strengths in Ealing and services are consistently delivering above minimum requirements. Child protection indicators show that there are good joint working arrangements for the safeguarding of children in the local area. All children on the Child Protection Register have a named, qualified social worker, all required reviews are completed on time and children spend an appropriate duration of time on the register. However, there was a significant increase in re-registrations, because of changes in family circumstances, sometimes involving domestic violence. The authority has appointed a dedicated worker to focus on related issues and to undertake preventative work.

Ealing's performance on initial assessments completed within seven days has improved substantially and is above comparable authorities. Good performance has been achieved on core assessments completed within 35 working days. Both were areas for improvement in the APA last year.

Ealing provides a good preventative Family Solutions service that takes referrals of families and looked after children in, or nearing, a crisis. Good outcomes continue from the Placement Stability Action Plan. There has been a reduction in the percentage of looked after children who have three or more placements during the year, these are now in line with comparable authorities. This was an area for improvement in the last APA. Fewer looked after children are placed out of the borough but the total still remains at nearly half and the authority feels that this is too high. Ealing has a localised marketing strategy for recruiting foster carers. Fostering allowances have been increased and linked to training. This has resulted in the recruitment of more local foster carers with better qualifications. This recruitment drive is to continue. A total of 95% of newly looked after children are placed within 20 miles of their normal home. This is the best figure in outer London. Kinship placements continue to increase.

The authority's fostering service has robust and thorough systems to provide safe and caring homes for children and young people needing foster care. Both the fostering and adoption services have been commended in respective inspection reports for the conduct and efficiency of their panels. Although the authority placed more children for adoption within 12 months of their Best Interest Decision, the percentage of looked after children adopted slipped to below the outer London average. However, all anticipated adoptions are on track. The authority is aware that 12% of reviews for looked after children did not take place within prescribed timescales, because of a systems problem, and have already taken remedial action.

## Enjoying and achieving

The authority makes a good contribution to ensuring that children and young people achieve well at school and enjoy their education and leisure activities.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and young children are given a good start to their education, although the proportion reaching the goals that are expected at the age of five is lower than the national average. One reason for this is the high numbers of pupils who are in the early stages of learning English. The pupils make reasonable progress at primary school, but the authority recognises that there is scope to improve attainment and progress at the ages of 7 and 11, which have not increased in line with the national trend. Some initiatives have already borne fruit, for example, the number of pupils attaining below Level 3 at the age of 11 has reduced as a result of planned intervention and support. Increased challenge to primary schools and sharper target-setting, supported by a well considered training programme, have the scope to make a positive impact.

The picture in secondary schools is one of rapid progress. Results at Key Stage 3 and GCSE are in line with those achieved nationally, and the rate of improvement in results over time is impressive. The pupils achieve well, given their low starting points; the progress made by pupils between Key Stages 2 and 4 was the third highest in the country and showed the biggest improvement nationally in 2005. The percentage of young people leaving care who gained 5 or more A\* to C grades is higher than that achieved nationally and the authority has set challenging targets to increase the numbers who attain at least one GCSE pass. Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities also achieve well, making good progress over their time at school. The attainment of black pupils, and Somali boys in particular, was identified as a weakness at the last APA. There has been some improvement in attainment for these groups, and targeted work is continuing to ensure that pupils do not fall behind. This work has also revealed that the attainment of white boys from lower socio-economic groups needs attention.

The work of the authority's school improvement professionals has been effective in helping to bring about the substantial improvements in outcomes at secondary level. It has also had an excellent impact on schools causing concern; no school has been made subject to a category of concern during an inspection for over a year and no schools are in special measures. The challenge to schools is robust and effective support is given.

Attendance figures are in line with national averages at both primary and secondary schools and the authority is working well with local communities and faith leaders to manage absence during religious festivals. The attendance of looked after children has improved, but is still below that of comparable authorities. Exclusion rates are falling and the proportion of these pupils who are taught for 20 hours or more has increased dramatically; almost all are catered for. However, the number of pupils who remain in alternative provision has not reduced significantly.

All pupils with disabilities have a review meeting during Year 9, at which transition plans are drawn up, which is good practice. However, the range, extent and involvement of adult services in reviews are not clear.

## **Making a positive contribution**

The views of children and young people feature strongly in Ealing's CYPP. More than 7000 young people responded to a recent consultation. The CYPP is written in a child-friendly way to encourage young people to read it and comment on its intentions and impact. There is an active Youth Forum that makes representations to the Corporate Parenting Panel and its members have been involved in the selection process for management posts. Half of the members of the Youth Forum are now from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, and the authority aims to increase this further by including more representatives from the Asian community. This will provide a more balanced reflection of the community. This was an area for improvement in the APA last year.

Ealing's young people and Members were recently selected to make a video for the National Children's Bureau as a good practice guide to corporate parenting. Ealing's looked after children were also chosen to make a video for the National Gallery on increasing young people's exposure to the arts.

The authority held a 'powerful voices conference' that enabled children with disabilities to share their views. The drop-in centre for looked after children supports them and care leavers positively in managing changes and responding to challenges in their lives, for instance, care leavers are given guidance and support to find their own homes.

Young people in Ealing's children's homes are involved in discussing issues arising in the home, such as food and any changes or developments. They are encouraged to maintain positive relationships with significant individuals in their lives. There are good systems to ensure that young people are supported in making decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run.

Black and minority ethnic young people are over-represented in the criminal justice system. Appropriate action plans have been developed by the Youth Offending Team to address this. The re-offending rate in relation to the custody population has reduced and is some 15% above the target.

Seventeen per cent of looked after children did not participate in their statutory review. This was a slight improvement on last year and is now close to the London average. The authority is aware of the importance of obtaining the views of looked after children and has a good action plan intended to support a swift increase in participation.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

Ealing's services make a good contribution to the economic well-being of children and young people. Sixth-form provision continues to be a strength and results at AS and A level are in line with those achieved nationally. Ealing has higher participation rates at age 16 and 17 than nationally. Looked after children who stay on at school do well; a further 15 are expected to begin at university this year, to join the 30 who are already there. This is one of the highest rates in the country. Most of these students are black young men.

In response to views expressed during consultations with young people, innovative steps are being taken to increase opportunities for them to participate in work-based learning. The authority is working with partners in the private sector to offer at least 100 additional places. In addition, a vocational centre for young people aged 14 to 16 plans to offer apprenticeships. Children looked after by the authority will have priority where this type of provision best meets their needs.

The work of the Youth Service has improved since it was inspected in 2004. Funding for the service is substantially below the target set by the DfES but the authority reports that, by working in collaboration with other services, the Youth Service has continued to meet the needs of young people. Scope for innovation, however, is limited by the constraints on funding.

The numbers of young people, including those looked after by the authority, not in education, employment or training and those whose destinations are not known have reduced year on year and are in line with regional averages.

The Integrated Service for Children with Disabilities, planned at the time of the last APA, has begun to have an impact on service users. The Key Worker pilot scheme has led to a reduction in stress for parents and greater consistency in working across the staff team.

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

Ealing Council and its partners provide effective leadership and clear direction for children's services. The senior team is now well established, providing stability and accountability. There is a shared understanding of what is to be achieved in the shorter and longer term, and a strong commitment to efficient joint working in order to reach challenging targets. Senior staff know their areas of responsibility exceptionally well and communication with others in their teams is good. Ealing is not content to rest on its laurels; while there is evident pride in its successes there is a strong drive to improve further, which is shared between officers and council members. Areas of weakness, for example with personnel in particular services, are tackled sensitively but robustly.

The views of children and young people have been central to shaping the priorities and future direction for children's services, as set out in the CYPP. Alongside appropriate strategies for improvement there is a strong focus on tracking and evaluating performance towards the targets.

The authority works well with other stakeholders to provide an increasingly well coordinated approach to providing services for vulnerable groups. Initiatives such as the Vulnerable Children's Service are helping to ensure that needs are met and there are no gaps in service.

Performance management was identified as a weakness at the last APA. Robust procedures were established and this aspect of the authority's work is much improved. The authority has made significant progress since the last APA; the steps it has taken have

had a good impact in almost all of the areas of weakness. Challenging targets have been set and, with the clear direction and vision provided at senior level and the well thought out plans for the future, there is excellent capacity for further improvement.

### Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a continued reduction in teenage pregnancies</li> <li>• an increase in the number of looked after children who have an annual health check</li> <li>• good school participation in sport including among black minority ethnic pupils.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the slow rate of referral of young people to CAMHS</li> <li>• the lack of timely assessments for young offenders with substance misuse problems.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• good overall indicators for child protection</li> <li>• good performance on timely initial and core assessments</li> <li>• placement stability for looked after children</li> <li>• prevention strategy including Family Solutions team.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the number of re-registrations on the child protection register</li> <li>• the lack of timeliness of reviews for looked after children.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• good performance at GCSE</li> <li>• high value added between Key Stages 2 and 4</li> <li>• overall attendance at primary and secondary schools</li> <li>• the percentage of schools causing concern is very low.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attainment at Key Stages 1 and 2</li> <li>• attainment of Somali boys</li> <li>• the number of permanently excluded pupils in alternative tuition for more than a year</li> <li>• the lack of transition plans for children with disabilities aged 14.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• active Youth Forum involved with CYPP, Corporate Parenting Board and recruitment of senior staff</li> <li>• the conference for children with disabilities to share their views</li> <li>• support, including drop-in centre for looked after children and care leavers.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• participation in looked after children reviews</li> <li>• over representation of black and minority ethnic young people in the criminal justice system</li> <li>• the involvement of Asian young people in the Youth Forum.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• good results in A and AS level examinations</li> <li>• innovations in providing work-based learning</li> <li>• high numbers of care leavers including those from black minority ethnic groups progressing to higher education.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• funding for the youth service.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective leadership and clear direction from senior staff</li> <li>• a strong commitment to obtaining and acting on the views of young people demonstrated</li> <li>• determination to tackle areas of weakness.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• none.</li> </ul>

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

**Staying safe**

- The frequency of reviews of looked after children.

**Enjoying and achieving**

- The percentage of permanent exclusions of children from schools.
- The range and extent of transition plans for children with disabilities.
- Outcomes for service users from Children with Disabilities Trust.

**Making a positive contribution**

- The involvement of Asian young people in the Youth Forum.
- Representation of young people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds in the criminal justice system.

**Achieving economic well being**

- The progress made against the targets for young people, including those looked after by the council, not in education, employment or training.
- Spending and funding for the youth service.



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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