



Making Social Care  
Better for People



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**1 December 2005**

Dear Mr Spark

**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005**

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 21 June 2005 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**

It is evident that the Local Authority contributes significantly to the health of children and young people across the borough. Outcomes in this area are good with evidence demonstrating that healthy lifestyles are promoted. There is full engagement of schools in the National Healthy Schools Standard and the number of schools participating in sport is good. Co-ordinated services have been successful in reducing teenage pregnancy, which has continued to decline over the last twelve months. There is effective multi-agency working to address substance misuse in younger people.

There has been inconsistent performance of non-acute assessments in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). A review of this service has recently been completed. The Council have stated that this review will result in a service improvement plan that should ensure that resources are used as efficiently as possible and achieve consistent performance.

The health needs of looked after children are well addressed. The council has acknowledged the need to review the health of children educated at home and this is planned to be taken forward over the next twelve months.

## **Staying safe**

Overall the outcomes are good, with strong evidence that agencies collaborate well to safeguard children. Child protection arrangements have been strengthened over the last twelve months. All serious case reviews have been undertaken in line with national guidance. Care management processes have also been enhanced with improvements in the timeliness of assessments, allocation of social workers for looked-after children and child protection cases, and all child protection cases are now reviewed within timescale. The number of children on the child protection register is below the national average; however, the rate of re-registrations is very good. There has been increased provision of child specific training, which further demonstrates a commitment to ensuring the safety of children. The launch of Dudley Safeguarding Board will further promote the integration of community safety alongside the work of the Multi Agency Protection Panel. There is a range of education initiatives that demonstrate that schools are committed to ensuring the safety and well being of pupils. There is a clear process within the council for collating, monitoring and reviewing information from Criminal Records Bureau checks.

Referral patterns for children in need do not reflect the national trend, with a lower than average referral and re-referral rate. The council has agreed to develop mechanisms that measure the effectiveness of the preventative strategy. This will ensure the on-going appropriateness of threshold criteria. Overall there is an appropriate diversity of placement choice to ensure that children's needs are met. Efficient planning decisions are made for children, with appropriate use of foster carers and kinship carers. Further improvement is required to the performance of Adoption Services together with the long-term stability for looked-after children. Service improvements have now been identified for the services for children with disabilities following the best value review. These improvements include increased service provision for children with more severe needs and will build on the added value that pooled budget arrangements have begun to provide in unit costs.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

Outcomes for this area are good. Overall childcare provision is good. A range of settings match a variety of needs and provision is increasing in response to local demand. A strategy to develop childcare for children and young people aged 0 to 16 through the Sure Start plan is supporting the expansion of affordable and accessible childcare suitable for working parents.

The authority provides good support for its schools and early years settings. There is a wide range of training and consultancy available for all those involved in the care and education of children and young people. A corporate and inclusive approach has been adopted in developing the Children's and Young People's Strategic Partnership. In so doing, imaginative and extensive initiatives have been implemented to meet the needs of children and young people.

Dudley's schools are effective. Recent school inspections found the quality of provision, leadership and management and personal development good overall. The proportion of schools giving cause for concern and placed in formal categories is broadly in line with national figures. None of the schools causing concern prior to 2004 remained in a category for longer than the expected period. The authority provides schools with proportionate support and training matched to need.

Standards of attainment and attendance require improvement in primary schools though secondary schools have improved in line with national trends. Attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are below the national figures and those of their statistical neighbours while at Key Stage 3, the pupils perform in line with national and similar schools. The proportion of pupils achieving one or more A\*- C grades at GCSE is broadly in line with national figures though the numbers of pupils achieving A\* - G grades is consistently higher than the national average. Effective action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is well planned and delivered. Pathfinder status for 14 to 19 year olds has been awarded in acknowledgement of the authority's improvements.

The attainment and attendance of looked after children is below that of other pupils. However, the authority has recently implemented a number of strategies to address these weaknesses and the attendance of looked after children is beginning to improve. Most of the looked after children have personal education plans which are monitored regularly.

The authority identified substantial weaknesses in the provision of special educational needs and a suitable strategy for improvement has been introduced following extensive consultation with schools, parents and elected members. The proportion of pupils for whom the authority maintained a Statement of Special Educational Need and the ratio of new statements in relation to the number of new referrals fell below the national average and statistical neighbours. Between 2002-2003 a high proportion of special school pupils were permanently excluded and of those pupils with Statements of Special Education Needs in mainstream schools, a very high proportion were excluded when compared with Dudley's statistical neighbours. Two out of the three special schools inspected in 2003-2004 were placed in a category of concern. Officers are determined to deliver the required improvements and they are aware of the challenges ahead. Improved stability in the recruitment and retention of educational psychologists has helped to reduce the backlog of referrals for Statements of Special Education Needs and a revised exclusion policy has decreased the number of exclusions. A combination of support and challenge from the Local Authority has led to improved provision in those special schools causing concern. Imaginative family learning initiatives help to drive the authority's determination to raise the aspirations of its young people.

Alternative tuition following permanent exclusion has been identified by the authority as an area for development. As a consequence, a protocol has been agreed with secondary schools regarding exclusions. A rising number of permanent exclusions have placed pupil referral units under pressure.

The local authority values the views of young people and responds effectively to the challenges posed by vulnerable groups. Schools provide a good range of extra-curricular activities which are well attended. Within the authority there is a range of leisure and creative arts facilities.

### **Making a positive contribution**

Outcomes for this area are good. Young people are being brought to justice sooner and the level of repeat crime has been reduced. The number of young people coming to the attention of the Youth Offending Team in 2003 represents a 37 per cent increase, however the number of crimes committed whilst increasing only showed a 13 per cent increase which represents only 3% of the youth population aged 10-17 years. Appropriate action is taken to prevent offending and reduce re-offending. The proportion of young offenders supported by a teacher from the Youth Offending Team is improving and a number of agencies have established good working relationships. While in custody, young people have the opportunity to undertake education, training and some work experience. National targets to engage young offenders in full time education, training or employment have not been met though there has been a gradual trend of improvement over the last three years.

A number of agencies including the youth service, health, environment and the arts, have engaged with children and young people to collect their views and involve them in decision making. Young people report that they feel their ideas and views have influenced decisions in their local area. The Youth Offending Institution and Youth Justice Board work together to place young people as near to their home as possible. The coordinated work of the Youth Offending team, partners in education, housing, social services and health has led to fewer young people "falling through the net" though difficulties still exist in trying to engage the post 16 year olds in further training.

The authority consults widely with children and young people on a range of issues including the views of disabled young people. The Children's Fund is managing the newly formed Youth Inclusion and Support Panel and young people with special educational needs and those from ethnic minority communities are involved in the consultation strategies. Seventy-nine per cent of 5-15 year olds report that they enjoy learning about different cultures at school and most of them feel that they "belong" to their local neighbourhood.

## Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes for this area are good. Of the schools inspected, there were no inadequate sixth forms but one special school was judged to be unsatisfactory in its post-16 provision. Of those schools with sixth forms, the average point scores of students entered for GCSE or equivalent and A/AS Level was in line with national figures. Over 2,000 pupils from Years 9 and 10 have taken part in a gifted and talented programme designed to encourage students to enter higher education between 2003 and 2005. Dudley has been awarded ten times more places than other local authorities.

Schools and colleges work closely to develop flexible learning opportunities across the borough. A number of agencies advise pupils on realistic employment expectations and steer them towards employment opportunities for example apprenticeships.

Some innovative projects have begun to attract looked after young people into the "world of work." They have participated in the Teenagers to Work Programme where day placements within the council were made available. Extended work placements for looked-after young people in Year 12 increase their chances of obtaining full time employment. The Local Skills Council reports that 14–19 collaborative groups are making rapid progress in developing vocational and flexible learning opportunities.

Family Literacy and numeracy programmes support parents and carers in improving their basic skills and increase their employability and earning potential.

## SUMMARY

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for improvement</b>
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the promotion of healthy lifestyles for children and young people.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promoting young people's mental health</li> <li>• assessing the health needs of children educated at home.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing children and young people with a safe environment</li> <li>• child protection procedures and interagency arrangements</li> <li>• support for children looked-after.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adoption services</li> <li>• long term stability of children looked-after</li> <li>• mechanisms to measure effectiveness of preventative strategies ensuring the appropriateness of threshold criteria.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support for schools</li> <li>• early Years provision</li> <li>• good working relationships between the authority and other agencies.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the management of and provision for those with special educational needs</li> <li>• attainment and attendance in primary schools</li> <li>• attendance and attainment of looked after children.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the number of young people being brought to justice sooner and the reduction of repeat crime</li> <li>• multi agency working</li> <li>• wide consultation with children and young people.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engagement of young offenders in full time education, training or employment.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• average point scores of GCSE and equivalent and A/AS level was in line with national figures</li> <li>• gifted and talented programme vocational and flexible learning between schools and colleges</li> <li>• family literacy and numeracy programmes.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase in the proportion of care leavers in education, training or employment.</li> </ul>

## Service management

There is evidence of corporate commitment to the improvement of children's services. The authority has a robust mechanism for the analysis of local need involving all agencies, children, parents and carers. Appropriate ambitions and priorities have been agreed with key stakeholders and mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring the progress of these are currently being developed. Overall, the self assessment demonstrated that the council was aware of its strengths and weaknesses and that appropriate improvement plans were in place; however it was descriptive in nature rather than evaluative of outcomes.

Awareness of 'Every Child Matters' is being developed at all levels across the organisation. Progress has been made in the development of the Children's Plan with completion planned for April 2006. With the new appointment of the Director for Children's Services, a route map for the integration of the social care and education staffing structure will be developed over the next twelve months which will need to be underpinned by a Workforce Development Strategy.

There is clear evidence of collaborative work across agencies, including the voluntary sector and there are sound examples of services working well to improve services for

children and young people, for example the improved arrangements for safeguarding children.

There is efficient management of financial resources with some emerging evidence of the effectiveness of pooled budgets. There is a rigorous, well-developed approach to performance management ensuring that frontline practitioners are engaged in the process. Improvements have been made over the last twelve months to establish a stable well-trained workforce.

The council has good capacity to improve further.

## **Areas for exploration in the joint area review**

### **Being healthy**

*Action is taken to promote children and young people's mental health:*

- the service improvement plan arising from recent review of CAMHS is ensuring the most efficient use of resources.

### **Staying safe**

*Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities live in safe environments and are protected from abuse and exploitation:*

- the range of support and service that is provided for children with disabilities including those with special educational needs.

### **Enjoying and achieving**

*Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and to achieve highly:*

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

- primary school attendance and standards of attainment.

*Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to enjoy and achieve:*

*Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy and achieve:*

- progress of improvements to provision for SEN including looked after children and children with disabilities.

## **Making a positive contribution**

*Children and young people, particularly from vulnerable groups, are supported in managing changes and responding to challenges in their lives:*

- establishing the principles of Every Child Matters into the work of all schools.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

*Children and young people who are looked after are helped to achieve economic well being:*

- progress in engaging care leavers with education, training or employment.

## **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

## APA final judgements 2005: Dudley Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements <sup>1</sup>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	<b>3</b>
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	<b>3</b>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	<b>3</b>
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	<b>3</b>

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### 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