

9 December 2009

Mr Nick Jarman
Director of Children's Services
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
Floor 4, The Council House
College Road
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN1 3AD

Dear Mr Jarman

Children's services annual rating

Ofsted guidance published in May 2009 explained that the annual rating would derive from a new performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the council has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant *Every Child Matters* indicators in the new National Indicator Set (NIS).

In considering the evidence in the profile to determine the children's services rating for 2009 it has become clear that the continuing gaps in the data are significant, particularly those relating to aspects of social care and services for Looked After Children. Ofsted has decided therefore to use 2009 as a transitional year easing into the full application of the new system in 2010. As a consequence, although the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's rating, we have interpreted the performance bands with flexibility and exercised professional judgement with caution.

The annual rating derives from a four point scale:

4	Performs excellently	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
3	Performs well	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
2	Performs adequately	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
1	Performs poorly	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, a rating of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, a rating of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects.

Children's services rating 2009

Children's services rating	Performs poorly (1)
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Children's services in Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council perform poorly.

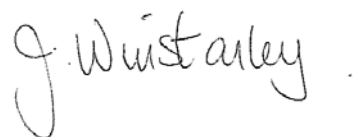
The overall effectiveness of only a minority of the local authority's inspected and regulated services and settings is good or better and there are significant weaknesses in areas of social care provision.

The local authority's adoption service was judged to be satisfactory in May 2008. However, both the local authority's fostering agency and the private fostering arrangements are inadequate, as are three of the authority's nine children's homes. Of six serious case reviews carried out two were conducted inadequately, two adequately and two well. The evaluation of serious case reviews raises significant weaknesses in practice in children's services. The overall effectiveness of childcare settings and childminders is adequate although performance is below that found nationally. The proportion of good or better primary schools is above that found in similar areas and nationally. There are no maintained special schools but three pupil referral units are good and two are satisfactory. However, performance in all other types of schools is below these comparators.

Performance against the large majority of national indicators is at least in line with similar areas and national figures though better in enjoying and achieving when compared with similar areas. There are weaknesses in relation to achievement at the age of 16, and behaviour and persistent absence are also areas of concern. Educational outcomes for young people by the age of 19 are not good enough and the inequality gap in relation to level 2 qualifications is too wide when compared with that found nationally. There are also significant weaknesses in indicators for staying safe, including the proportions of social care assessments that are completed within the expected timescales and the support and outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

The children's services rating is provided for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The rating of local authority children's services will contribute significantly to the managing performance theme of each local authority's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment and therefore to the score for each local authority overall.

Yours sincerely

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

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA