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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Mr Buckley

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

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment 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 ¹
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	3
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3

1

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

Derbyshire is a council that is performing consistently above minimum requirements. It has a well developed strategic infrastructure and established partnership arrangements to meet the needs of its service users. It has sound consultation arrangements in place and ensures that all stakeholders, including children and young people (CYP), can participate in service planning. Whilst performance has declined in some key areas, the authority has developed a wide ranging Children and Young Persons Plan (CYPP), which identifies targets and actions needed to work towards improving outcomes for service users.

Being healthy

The contribution the council's services make to improving outcomes in health are good. There is good evidence of strong partnership work, which increasingly ensures that detailed analysis results in the introduction of strategies to improve health outcomes for CYP. The authority is very successful in working with schools to promote health and active lifestyles, evident in Ofsted inspection judgements and in the increasing number of schools that are achieving the national Healthy School Status Award. Innovative support programmes have been used to prevent substance abuse, drug taking and smoking. The Drug and Alcohol Action Team have set up multi-agency training programmes including theatre in education initiatives across the county. The effectiveness of this work is good and young people receive appropriate assessments and treatment.

There has been good analysis of the issues surrounding the increase in teenage pregnancies, resulting in greater awareness and identification of geographical variations and where some specific areas of the county have conception rates above the national average. A teenage pregnancy strategy has been put in place but the impact of this work is not yet fully realised. The percentage of health checks and assessments of looked after children have fallen. Improvements in these areas are expected in part due to the increased involvement of specialist looked after children school nurses.

Multi-agency partnerships have helped develop a Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) strategy. A progressively comprehensive service is now available to meet the mental health needs of young people. Healthy care standards have been established in children's homes. Weaknesses concerning the treatment and administration of medicine, health and intimate care and promoting development and health, identified in the inspections of children's homes and residential special schools, have been dealt with successfully. There is an effective coordinated approach to meeting children's needs with complex learning difficulties.

Staying safe

The contribution the council's services make to improving outcomes in this area are good overall. There is a well developed Local Safeguarding Children's Board with multi-agency senior level representation. Derbyshire has a Children's Trust in place that is chaired by the lead member for children's services. There is also a countywide Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) in place that has wide representation from providers and commissioners, including the voluntary, community and private sector. The

authority has developed strong partnerships with health and other agencies and joint working is effective. However, local area strategic forums for devolved decision making and commissioning are not yet fully developed throughout the county.

The authority has effective and comprehensive systems in place to support CYP and their carers in ensuring that they provide a safe and secure environment. Multi-agency home safety equipment schemes provide free equipment helping to reduce accidents in the home. The number of CYP killed or seriously injured in road accidents has reduced from 133 in 2002 to 95 in 2005 but the council remains in the worst quartile for this indicator. This is identified as a priority in the area's CYPP.

Derbyshire has made significant investment during 2005/06 in ensuring the safety of children in early years and childcare settings. Additionally, there were no issues in the 'staying safe' category in Ofsted inspections for the majority of childcare settings and the early years and childcare service is appropriately following up those issues that were identified for sessional care providers. Accident rates for CYP and staff within schools are monitored and have reduced. The impact of diversity policies and procedures are monitored through the QDD process of validation for school self-evaluation. The levels of reported incidents of bullying in school have declined, as has the number of racist incidents reported; however, further analysis of this data is needed to fully assess the impact.

There has been a decline in the performance of referral and assessment processes overall. Referrals of children in need have reduced from 529 to 488 but the percentage of repeat referrals within 12 months has increased from 18.6% to 26.8%. The percentage of referrals of children in need that led to initial assessments reduced from 44.9% to 24.2% and the percentage of initial assessments completed within timescale dipped slightly from 70.7% to 67.1%. The largest decrease has been in the number of core assessments of children in need, which has reduced from 76.8% to 29.9% and this is significantly lower than IPF and national levels. This was explained to be in part due to staff initially not recording assessments correctly on a new single electronic recording system. Action has been taken to address this issue and monitoring now needs to ensure that all recording is done consistently throughout the service. The integrated children's system was introduced throughout the directorate in April 2006 and all existing and new child protection and looked after children cases will be fully inputted onto the database by July 2006.

While the ratio of the percentage of children in need that were from Black and minority ethnic communities is at 1.53, the ratio of BME children on the Child Protection Register has risen from 2.05 to 2.75 and is double that for IPF and national levels and more preventative work is needed.

The main regulatory issues in the area of 'staying safe', in respect of the council's residential provision for looked after children and within special schools, have now been satisfactorily resolved and some units are now operating in the top band for delivering good services.

Ninety-seven per cent of looked after children statutory reviews and 100% of child protection reviews were held on time in the year. Long term stability of looked after children continues to be a challenging area for the authority. The number of children who have been looked after for two and a half, or more, years and have been living in the same placement for at least two years or are placed for adoption, dropped from 65.9% to 50.3% and adoptions of looked after children have also reduced from 8.7 to 6.9, both of these indicators are lower than IPF and national figures. The authority realise that performance in this key area for vulnerable children has to improve in this coming year.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution the council's services make to improving outcomes in this area are good overall. Standards continue to rise. Provision in the early years is good and children make good progress. The percentage of looked after children in early years settings has risen significantly with almost all having a personal education plan. At the end of Key Stage 1, standards reached by children in reading and writing are well above the national average and above the average for similar areas. Standards in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 are above the national average and in line with those for similar areas. Key Stage 2 results are broadly average, although standards reached in mathematics are above average. Progress made from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 is satisfactory. At both Key Stage 3 and at GCSE, results achieved are broadly average, though the percentage of pupils achieving at least one GCSE A* to G grade is above the national average. Progress made from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, and from Key Stage 3 to GCSE is broadly satisfactory. There is good evidence that some vulnerable groups are achieving well, including traveller children and Black Caribbean and African pupils. The percentage of young people leaving care aged 16 or over with five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C has also improved.

Based on inspection outcomes, the overall quality of provision in schools is good and children and young people enjoy school. Inspection outcomes also judge learners with difficulties and/or disabilities to be making good progress. Attendance overall is satisfactory and there have been small improvements. However, the absence rates for looked after children is above the national average and that for similar areas. Fixed and permanent exclusions remain above the national average. The number of pupils with special educational needs excluded from school is still disproportionately high despite the authority's efforts to reduce this figure, which have not been effective. Likewise the proportion of looked after children excluded is high.

The authority provides good leadership of the education service and effectively supports and challenges schools. The authority effectively uses, and promotes, strategies that have brought about a rise in standards. The proportion of schools in Ofsted categories is lower in comparison to other similar areas and nationally; this is evidence of the success of the authority's work. However, the authority is aware of a difference in the targets they have set for standards and the targets set by schools. Robust dialogue is ongoing to ensure that schools effectively use assessment to inform targets. The CYPP clearly identifies the areas of further improvement and children and young people were actively involved in drawing up priorities.

Making a positive contribution

The contribution the council's services make to improving outcomes in this area are good. The council has good mechanisms to ensure that children and young people have an opportunity to express their views and wishes and these are listened to and acted upon. Children have become much more involved in the decision making processes in the authority.

A number of services are engaged in supporting the social and emotional development of children and young people. Youth fora are in place in all district council areas and the council is trying to build stronger links between the youth fora and school councils. The authority has consulted extensively with children and young people during the development of the CYPP and all of their key priorities, with the exception of one, have been included in this document.

The increased numbers of independent advocates from four to 12, and increased capacity within the Children's Rights Service, will ensure that looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will be better able to make a positive contribution. However, the number of looked after children who communicated their views at their statutory review has reduced from 73% to 69% and the council remains in the lowest performing category for this area. A corporate parenting officer has been appointed and a corporate parenting policy outlines the roles and responsibilities for professionals with regular reports to elected members. However, there are no structured mechanisms in place for looked after children to routinely share their views with senior partnership officers or councillors.

While the figure for final warnings, reprimands and convictions of looked after children has reduced from 4.5 to 3.7, the council remains in one of the lower bandings for this indicator and they accept that they need to work harder to reduce rates of offending among looked after children.

The authority has taken action to improve the extent of activities available to children and young people and the youth service has increased work at weekends and during school holidays to engage young people purposefully. During the 2005 summer holiday, the equivalent of 190 days activity was delivered throughout the county.

An effective multi-agency protocol has been adopted for transition planning involving young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the council's performance remains in the top band for this indicator, with more than 90% of transition plans completed for children and young people.

Achieving economic well-being

The contribution the council's services make to improving outcomes in this area are good overall with significant evidence of the close partnership between the authority, Connexions and the Learning and Skills Council. Positive action has taken place to support families, for example, through a significant increase in new childcare places. Although the

overall proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) has fallen, the variation in the numbers of 16 to 18 year olds suggests that efforts to reduce this figure vary in effectiveness. The CYPP has identified this as a key area to improve and a reduction in NEET strategy has been drafted. Significant progress has been made in the proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training; this remains well above the national level and that for similar authorities. There has also been progress in the number of young mothers who participate in education training and employment. There is a multi-agency approach to transition reviews and almost all young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive reviews within timescales.

The Children's Trust has established a new partnership structure to continue to develop 14-19 education and training across the county. Success has been seen in the increasing numbers of young people taking youth apprenticeships, Track apprenticeships or school based vocational facilities and programmes. The new Alfreton Vocational Academy is contributing to this improved provision and the authority is actively working with other partners and providers to extend opportunities across the county.

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

The council's overall success in implementing change, which delivers benefits for service users, demonstrates that it has a good capacity to improve. The authority has developed its provision and priorities in close collaboration with its partners, based on a sound analysis of need and in consultation with service users and the wider community. There is good cooperation between partners and an effective structure, through the Children's Trust, for translating policy into practice. There are examples of good commissioning strategies in place based on a sound analysis of need and designed to improve outcomes in the most disadvantaged areas of the county.

The CYPP is focused around the five Every Child Matters outcomes and sets out specific targets and actions, which are designed to lead to improvements for young people based on contributions from all partner agencies. The plan is written in a style that is accessible to a wider audience and children and young people have played an active part in informing the priorities and key actions contained within the plan. The plan clearly identifies the resources needed to bring about successful outcomes.

Whilst the authority have developed strong strategic arrangements with a wide variety of partner agencies and have in place a Children's Trust, they still need to consistently devolve decision making down to lower district levels throughout the county in order to meet the needs of local communities effectively. In addition, progress has not been as quick as anticipated in the introduction and implementation of some other key initiatives consistently across the county. For example, the preventative Strategy and the Common Assessment Framework have yet to be rolled out throughout the council.

Some key performance indicators have also not been maintained over the course of the year and the authority's performance in some cases has fallen to below that of comparator council's, eg core assessments of children in need, looked after children absent from

school and final warnings and convictions of looked after children. The proportion of residential care workers who have achieved level three NVO has declined from 75% to 39% and the authority will need to significantly increase this to maintain an appropriate balance of suitably qualified staff within its children’s residential units. The authority has already made major staffing changes to one of their residential units where concerns were reported by the CSCI and standards within that home have improved greatly. In terms of forward planning, the council’s gross expenditure on services to children is lower than both the IPF and national figures and is set to decrease further next year, while this is likely to increase for comparators and nationally. Despite the authority predicting an increase in the number of children it identifies for adoption, the gross expenditure on the adoption service is also set to decrease to a level which will be significantly lower than IPF and the national average.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promotion of healthy and active lifestyles in schools • progress towards a comprehensive CAMHS. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • numbers of teenage pregnancies • health checks and assessments of looked after children.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fully operational Local Safeguarding Children Board with good multi-agency representation at senior levels • introduction of single electronic records and ICS throughout the directorate • completion of children protection and local after children reviews within timescale • improvements in ‘staying safe’ in early years and childcare and residential settings. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lower performance of referral and assessment processes • high ratio of Black minority ethnic children and young people on the Child Protection Register • decreased long term placement stability of looked after children • reduced numbers of looked after children adopted.

<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continued improvement in attainment in infant, primary and secondary schools • achievement of some vulnerable groups of children • effective strategies used and promoted by the council to improve attainment • good challenge and support provided by the council to ensure schools continue to improve. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the rates of permanent exclusions of learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities • the attendance of looked after children.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good mechanisms for consulting and listening to young people • more children being involved in decision making processes at all levels • increased youth service provision at weekends and holiday periods. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fewer number of children and young people contributing to their looked after children statutory reviews • high proportion of looked after children receiving final warnings and convictions.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective agency partnership work • increase of vocational opportunities and apprenticeships for young people. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce variations in the numbers of young people NEET.
<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective close collaboration with partners • participation of children and young people in drawing up the CYPP. 	<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • implement consistently key initiatives across the county • sustain improvements in KPIs.

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

Being Healthy

Healthy life-styles are promoted for children and young people:

- Teenage pregnancies in specific areas of Derbyshire.
- Health checks and assessments of LACs.

Staying Safe

*The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:
Looked after children live in safe environments and are protected from abuse and exploitation:*

- Lower performance of referral and assessment processes.
- High ratio of BME and CYP on CPR.
- Decreased long term placement stability of LAC.
- Reduced numbers of LAC adopted.

Enjoying and achieving:

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

- The rates of permanent exclusions of learners with special educational needs.
- The attendance of LAC.

Making a positive contribution:

Action is taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people:

- High proportion of LAC receiving final warnings and convictions.

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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