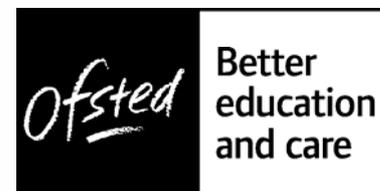


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Making Social Care
Better for People



David Connor
Acting Deputy Chief Education Officer
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1 December 2005

Dear Mr Connor

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 20 July 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

Outcomes in health are good. There is evidence of strong partnership work to improve health outcomes for children and young people. The health needs of looked after children have been met effectively and indicators are above comparators and national averages. There is good engagement from schools in the Healthy Schools Initiative with 57% achieving level three status. Working in partnership with the Drug and Alcohol Action Team, the council is improving access for children and young people to drug, alcohol and tobacco education. Training and advice is available for foster carers, residential workers and looked after children on alcohol, drugs and tobacco misuse.

Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is an area of strength for the council who have established referral systems and common assessment processes between voluntary providers and statutory services. The recently developed countywide strategy should assist with parity of provision of services across the whole area. The number of social workers working with CAMHS has increased this year.

Although some areas have seen significant reductions, there has been an overall increase in teenage pregnancies over the year. Particular areas of the county are now above national averages. The council has sought to redress this by filling the Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator vacancy and a revised plan is now in place to deal specifically with targeting areas where there are high conception rates. However, monitoring procedures to measure the impact of the work are not yet established.

Inspections of children's homes, residential special schools and the fostering service evidenced weaknesses in the treatment and administration of medicine, health and intimate care and promoting development and health.

Staying safe

Outcomes in this area are good. Officers and elected members give high priority to the protection of children and partnership working is strong. This is reflected in major plans and joint agency work promoting the welfare of children. Policies and procedures are in place to safeguard children and the Council's Child Protection service has achieved ISO 9001. Comprehensive Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) training is provided in schools, with detailed records kept of staff and governors who have received training. Schools that have not attended training in the last two years are vigorously followed up.

The numbers of children and young people on the child protection register has continued to decline and are now in line with comparators. Re-registrations, however, have slightly increased this year and reducing these is a priority in the Local Area Agreement (LAA). All children on the child protection register and all looked after children are allocated to a named social worker. Reviews are completed within the expected timescale. A safeguarding board is in the early stages of development and recently reviewed ACPC procedures are in place.

The number of initial assessments undertaken within seven days has gradually increased and is now above comparators for similar authorities; the number of core assessments completed within 35 days has increased but remains slightly below comparators. Very good performance has been maintained for the stability of placements. Overall the adoption of looked after children has reduced for the second year, and although in line with comparator authorities and the national average this is a priority in the Local Area Agreement. The adoption service has been restructured with additional management invested in the service.

During the first inspection of childcare providers, whilst the number of actions required overall is lower than nationally, there is a higher than average number of actions against suitable persons in childminding and sessional day care. The council has a "Pathway to Registration" process in place and all potential childcare providers are expected to attend child protection training before registration. Over 90% of children with disabilities have a transition plan to support their move from Children's Services to Adult Services.

There are regulatory issues in respect of the council's provision, both in children's homes and in residential special schools. These services have evidenced weaknesses in meeting the National Minimum Standards in areas such as child protection procedures and training, behaviour management and vetting of staff and visitors. The council is aware of the issues and is taking action to address them.

The council has a number of procedures policies and initiatives in place to promote equality and diversity. Some schools, however, have not been reporting incidents. The council has taken action to address this but needs to continue to monitor the impact of these actions.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are good overall. The high quality of early years provision enables children to succeed in reaching early learning goals. It also provides a good foundation for further learning. At the end of Key Stage 1 children reach higher levels than those in similar authorities in reading, writing and mathematics. At Key Stage 2 results are in line with national levels and similar areas in mathematics and science. In English results are above the national rates and in line with similar areas. At both Key Stage 3 and at GCSE the results achieved are broadly in line with similar areas. The council has been successful in raising attainment in English at Key Stage 3 as part of a highly focused improvement strategy. The progress made by pupils from the end of Key Stage 2 to GCSE is close to that of similar areas. The achievement of looked after children has been improving well. The council has clear and well established strategies together with other agencies to support this. The proportion of looked after children who achieve one or more GCSE grade A*-G is in line with similar authorities and a comparatively high proportion now gain 5 GCSEs grade A*-C. Personal education plans are in place for 80% of looked after children.

Attitudes to school are good and attendance has been improving. Attendance rates and those for permanent exclusion are similar to comparable authorities and have been improving steadily. The overall quality of provision in schools is good and in line with similar authorities based on inspection outcomes. Progress has been made on reducing the level of permanent exclusions although it is high for pupils with special education needs. This has been identified as a priority for action. The proportion of supervised juveniles in education, employment and training is high.

In the Youth Service provision young people make good progress in a wide range of programmes and settings. Many who have not previously engaged well with education and who experience difficult personal circumstances, benefit from their involvement in these programmes. They acquire a variety of new skills and knowledge and make significant advances in their personal development, increasing their self-confidence and changing their attitudes and behaviour.

The Council provides clear and strong leadership of the education service and good support for schools. Good use is made of data and other information to identify areas of under-performance and thorough strategies have been developed to address them. There has been a similar proportion of schools in Ofsted categories of concern compared with other areas over recent years. However this has improved and the proportion in these categories is now low. Where schools are placed in these categories they have made substantial and timely improvement with Council support.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are good. A wide-ranging 'Engaging Young People' strategy encompasses a county youth forum and district youth panels. Large numbers of young people have participated in youth forum elections. There has been wide ranging consultation with young people on the new vision of the development of children's services in Derbyshire, through an open day, school councils and other channels. Young people and carers are consulted well on their experience of child protection proceedings. An increasing number of looked after children are participating in statutory reviews and this is now similar to the national position. A Children's Rights Officer is now in place to support progress on this and other issues.

The authority has taken action to improve the extent of direct support that is provided to young carers. It has commissioned a thorough review of how well the needs of such carers are currently being met and has drawn up coherent plans to make improvements. An effective multi-agency protocol has been adopted for transition planning involving young people with special educational needs. Very strong links between the council and the Connexions service and other agencies have been forged in implementing the protocol. The rate of re-offending by young people has been falling and is now around the national level. There is however a high proportion of final warnings and convictions amongst looked after children.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are good. The proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training has improved every year since 2001 and is now well above both the national level and that for similar authorities. A useful contribution to this outcome is made by a care leaver employment project and well co-ordinated volunteering opportunities for harder to place young people. The proportion of young people aged 16-19 in the area overall who are not in education, employment or training has been falling and is now close to the national average. Good progress has been made in developing a coherent approach to 14-19 education and training in the county. Participation in a 14-19 Pathfinder project has supported this. The council has worked closely with the local Learning and Skills Council and other stakeholders to build a joint approach to planning. Some encouraging early outcomes have included the decision to develop a Vocational Academy in Alfreton. A 14-19 learning entitlement has been drawn up but is in the early stages of agreement and implementation. The council acknowledges that the level of participation of young mothers in education, training or employment is low and needs improving.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for Improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children and Adolescent Mental Health Service working with voluntary providers on joint processes • health needs of looked after children. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the numbers of teenage pregnancies • processes and practice in the fostering service and residential provision.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment and child protection processes • safeguarding Board in early stage • stability of placements • children with disabilities who have a transition plan. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adoption of looked after children • regulatory processes and practice • monitoring the impact of diversity policies and procedures.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good quality of early years provision • good levels of attainment and attendance in primary and secondary schools • good levels of participation of supervised young offenders in education, employment & training • range of youth service initiatives /programmes • strong proven capacity of the council to drive improvements and support schools. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the rates of permanent exclusion of learners with special education needs.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the 'Engaging Young People' strategy • improvement in the proportion of looked after children participating in statutory reviews • good range of activities for consulting children and young people in social care. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high proportion of final warnings and convictions amongst looked after children.

<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participation of care leavers in education, training and employment • emerging 14-19 strategies in partnership with LSC. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low level of participation of young mothers in education, training and employment.
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Service management

There is evidence throughout the council’s work of strong leadership and clear strategic direction with high levels of elected member commitment and involvement. The council is moving positively towards integrated children’s services including partners. A Workforce Reform Strategy Group has been established in relation to the children’s workforce strategy and involves statutory, voluntary and public sector partners.

The council has a good knowledge of its strengths and the activities required to improve outcomes for children and young people. It is very effective at identifying areas of under-performance quickly and developing imaginative and innovative responses together with other agencies. Clear priorities have been set and these are incorporated into business and service plans. Strong partnership working has been used positively in producing the Local Area Agreement. Effective joint agency working is evidenced with clear focus on identifying gaps and priorities.

Performance Management is also an area of strength and the council makes good use of external accreditation systems. The council evidences a consistently strong commitment to quality assurance and setting high standards. There is a strong commitment to inclusion and involvement of children and young people in developing and improving services. The council is taking positive steps to recruit and retain foster carers but the cost of placing children with independent agencies remains a budget risk. The Council has excellent capacity to improve.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

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

- teenage pregnancies in specific areas of Derbyshire.

Staying safe

Children and young people are provided with a safe environment:

The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:

- Early years - impact of advice and guidance
- impact and effectiveness of promoting race equality.

Enjoying and achieving

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

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

- impact of the Review of Special Educational Needs and actions arising from it.

Achieving economic well-being

Action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is planned and delivered in a coordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16-19) is of good quality:

- the impact of 14-19 strategies on the opportunities for young people and dissemination of practice developed through the 14-19 Pathfinder.

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: Derbyshire County Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
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 capacity to improve its services for children and young people	4

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