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Ms Jo Davidson
Interim Strategic Director Children and Young People
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Dear Ms Davidson

Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment 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, an assessment of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2009, while the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's assessment, the minimum requirements for each grade outlined in the guidance do not alone define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

Derby City Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Derby City Council perform adequately. In 2009, a transitional year, Derby City was assessed as performing well. However, in 2010 there are not enough good providers across services and settings, particularly universal provision, to meet the requirements for this grade.

The majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. About half of primary and secondary schools are adequate. This is also the case for post-16 provision. In the last year four primary schools were judged not to be providing a satisfactory quality of education. Although inspection shows there is very little inadequate early years and childcare provision, only 61% are good or better. Although two of the seven local authority children's homes are good, the rest are only satisfactory. Other provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them more vulnerable is better. For example, almost all special schools and the pupil referral unit are good. Local fostering and adoption agencies are good.

A recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found significant progress in addressing areas for development identified at a previous inspection. Strengths are identified in staff supervision arrangements and increased staff capacity. Caseloads are now manageable. Children at risk of immediate harm are identified promptly and dealt with appropriately.

National performance measures show the majority of indicators are in line with or below the national or similar area averages. Some health outcomes are good and improving. Many five-year-olds achieve well. However, progress is not maintained in all primary schools and as a result attainment in national tests at the age of 11 is below both similar areas and national averages. Attainment at the age of 16 is in line with similar areas but over time standards have risen more slowly than found elsewhere. Examination results for 19-year-olds have fallen behind those in similar areas and England. Good progress has been made in reducing the gap in achievement of those from low-income families and their peers at the age of 11 but this is not the case at the age of 16. Over time, more 19-year-olds from low-income families are gaining good qualifications.

Key areas for further development

- Improve universal provision so that more primary and secondary schools and post-16 settings are good or better.
- Improve the progress children make as they move through primary school and so raise attainment at the age of 11.
- Increase the number of young people from low-income families who gain qualifications at the age of 16.

Outcomes for children and young people

Local arrangements to encourage children and young people to live healthy lives are usually very successful. Nearly all schools and children's homes are good at helping children and young people know how to maintain healthy lifestyles. More children are taking part in the recommended amount of physical education and sport each year. Over time, the number of children that are too overweight has reduced and is lower than elsewhere at the ages of five and 11. The number of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant continues to be higher than elsewhere, but is reducing more quickly. More parents of disabled children report good services than elsewhere. Services to support emotional health and well-being continue to improve and the majority of children and young people when asked say they think they have good relationships with their family or friends.

Arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are almost always good. Ofsted inspection of schools and colleges confirm this. Good local services work well together to protect children at risk of harm. The inspection of front-line child protection services identified that a common approach for assessing and meeting the needs of children is used effectively with disabled children. However, this is not yet used consistently across the wider partnership. On-going difficulties with the integrated children's system result in important weaknesses in social workers' recording of work with children and families. Targeted action is improving outcomes and safeguarding arrangements: for example, more children in need of protection have been successfully supported, reducing the need for a second or subsequent child protection plan. Most recent data show improved performance in completing core assessments, but there has been a continued decline in the number of initial assessments completed on time. There are some strengths in the arrangements for ensuring that children are safe within the community. Fewer are admitted to hospital as a result of accidental or deliberate injury than similar areas, and numbers of young people saying they feel bullied is no higher than elsewhere. Numbers of children seriously injured on the roads are lower than national figures but have been rising in recent years.

Although most child carers, schools and colleges are good at helping children and young people enjoy their learning, there is too much provision that is only adequate. More young children achieve the expected level at the age of five than elsewhere, but only about three-quarters make the expected progress in English and mathematics as they move through primary school. Provisional data for 2010 shows very good improvement in the numbers achieving five A* to C grades at GCSEs, including English and mathematics. Pupils from some minority ethnic groups do not do as well as their peers. Not as many young people from low-income families do as well as similar groups nationally, but most recent results show they are catching up with their peers in Derby City. Most children in care achieve the expected grades in English and mathematics at the age of 11.

Very successful arrangements for involving children and young people in planning and reviewing local services have been in place for a long time. Future developments build on previous success with a focus on family intervention projects, and local children contributing to the development of neighbourhood action plans. Almost all schools and other settings are good at involving young people in decision-making and activity in their communities. The majority of schools offer two hours extended activities with particular focus on helping more disadvantaged children participate in activities of their choice. Youth restorative disposal approaches introduced by Derbyshire Constabulary are leading to a significant fall in first-time offenders. The number re-offending stays about the same each year and is on a par with similar areas.

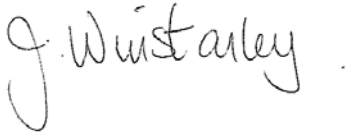
The local authority knows that not all young people do as well as they can at the age of 19 and has identified targets to increase the numbers of 16- to 19-year-olds achieving good qualifications. Often those from low-income families do as well as their peers. Locally provided information advice and guidance, and targeted pre-employment training, is leading to more 16- to 19-year-olds taking up work, education or training opportunities. Targets for all young people in this area have been exceeded, although drop out rates are high at the age of 17. Derby City has a higher percentage of teenage mothers in work, education or training than elsewhere and increasingly young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are involved. However, targets for engaging this group have not been met and future action is planned to identify the range of specialist provision needed to increase their opportunities.

Prospects for improvement

Although some outcomes for children and young people are improving this is not consistent across all aspects of provision. The review of the Children and Young People's Plan demonstrates an appropriate range of activities to improve outcomes, especially for those whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable. A revised plan for 2010 to 2011 strengthens the focus on raising attainment for all and closing the attainment gap for specific groups, such as those from minority ethnic groups or with special educational needs. Strong support from the local authority is a factor in securing necessary improvements in the weakest schools. However, it is not fully successful in its work to help failing schools, as it takes longer for them to improve than in other local authorities. Good partnership working is demonstrated through clear improvements in health outcomes and progress being made in addressing areas for development identified in the unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services. The inspection found the local authority's policies and procedures for recording of supervision were not consistently followed. The youth offending service has developed good quality assurance and 'gate-keeping' processes.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment