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17 December 2008

Mr Andrew Flack  
Corporate Director for Children and Young People  
Derby City Council  
Middleton House  
27 St Mary's Gate  
Derby  
DE1 3NN

Dear Mr Flack

## **Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Derby City Council 2008**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2008 annual performance assessment (APA) for your council. The evaluations and judgements in the letter draw on a range of data and information which covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. As you know, the APA is not based on an inspection of your services and, therefore, can only provide a snapshot based on the evidence considered. As such, I am grateful to you for assuring the quality of the data provided.

Performance is judged on a four point scale as detailed in the handbook.

I should emphasise that the grades awarded are based on an overall 'best fit' model. For instance, an outstanding judgement of Grade 4 reflects that overall most aspects, but not necessarily all, of the services in the area are working very well. We know that one of the features of outstanding provision is the drive for greater improvement and no council would suggest, and nor would Ofsted, that a judgement of outstanding indicates that everything is perfect. Similarly within a judgement of inadequate overall, Grade 1, there could be some aspects of the overall service that are adequate or even good. Judgements are made in a rounded way, balancing all of the evidence and giving due consideration to outcomes, local and national contexts, priorities and decision-making.



The following table sets out the grades awarded for performance in 2008.

<b>Assessment judgement area</b>	<b>APA grade</b>
Overall effectiveness of children's services	3
Being healthy	4
Staying safe	3
Enjoying and achieving	2
Making a positive contribution	4
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	3

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale  
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate*

## Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 3

Derby City Council delivers good services for children and young people overall. Its contribution to improving outcomes in being healthy and making a positive contribution is outstanding, and good in two other outcomes. However, the outcome for enjoying and achieving from age 5 to 16 remains adequate. Standards at the ages of 11 and 16, although slowly improving over time, remained below those in similar councils and national averages in 2007. The council recognises that, despite improvements in aspects of 14–19 provision, the provision for Diplomas across the city has been slow to develop. The council has made good progress in responding to the recommendations of the 2007 APA and JAR, particularly with regard to further strengthening safeguarding issues and achieving better health outcomes for children and young people. Here, outcomes show an extremely positive picture. The identification of priorities is accurate and detailed plans are in place for future progress, particularly in terms of raising standards.

The commitment to fully engage with children and young people and act upon their views on the services provided is exemplary. There is strong evidence that this has impacted significantly on participation rates and improvements to service provision. The council's commitment to narrowing the gap for the most vulnerable children and young people has improved the outcomes for these groups. In particular, outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have improved since the JAR. The council is extremely successful in its corporate parenting role with the performance indicators for looked after children being better than found in similar councils and nationally.

## Being healthy

Grade 4

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is modest and although consistent with the evidence, underestimates the significant improvements made in improving outcomes for children and young people.

### Major strengths

- As part of a concerted and coherent partnership approach there has been significant progress in public health outcomes: teenage pregnancy rates have been reduced, making Derby City the most improved council in the East Midlands; infant mortality figures have fallen, figures remain below similar councils, and show a steady reduction; an inter-agency programme of health promotion has resulted in increased rates for breast-feeding, smoking cessation, and a reduction in substance misuse.
- Waiting times for child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) have been reduced in line with previous recommendations from the 2007 APA and the JAR; service provision has been strengthened and new targeted services have been commissioned.

- Integrated services for children with disabilities have delivered positive outcomes for parents, children and families. The Light House, a joint project between Derby City Council and Derby Primary Care Trust for children with disabilities and challenging behaviour, is widely praised by children and their families.

**Important weaknesses and areas for development**

**Staying safe**

**Grade 3**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

**Major strengths**

- Prevention services have continued to develop with an increase in the number of children's centres and schools that offer extended services. Common assessment framework training has been delivered extensively to staff from all organisations concerned with the welfare of the child, including the police, education and health. Many of these staff now take a lead professional role in casework with the child.
- The Children's Partnership has continued to make significant improvement in the timeliness of reviews of looked after children and has made further investment in the independent reviewing service over the last year. All reviews are chaired independently and take place in the child's home, which has contributed to more children and young people participating in their reviews than ever before, and is higher than for similar councils. Placement stability continues to be very good.
- The latest inspections of the Fostering and Adoption Service were very positive. The number of foster carers and placements has increased and the length of time children wait to be placed for adoption has reduced.

**Important weaknesses and areas for development**

- The proportion of initial assessments completed on time, identified as an issue in the previous year's JAR report, has declined from 62% to 61%, which remains significantly below the average for similar councils at 74%.

**Enjoying and achieving**

**Grade 2**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

### Major strengths

- Increasingly effective support and challenge for schools, in particular where standards and achievement are causing concern, have resulted in fewer schools being placed into a category of concern at inspection. The proportion of schools in a category of concern is below the rates nationally and in similar councils.
- Standards and achievement for vulnerable groups, including looked after children and young people and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities continue to be good in comparison with statistical neighbours and those nationally.
- Achievement at the Foundation Stage improved in 2007 to achieve parity with national performance.
- Standards and progress at Key Stage 3 continue to be above the performance of similar councils and in line with national performance.

### Important weaknesses and areas for development

- The number of permanent secondary school exclusions in 2007 was greater than the national average and provision for those excluded was insufficient.
- Key Stage 2 results have been slow to rise, in comparison with statistical neighbours and national figures.
- Despite some improvements in the accessibility of childcare provision across the city, the day care and holiday provision in childcare and early years for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is insufficient.

## Making a positive contribution

**Grade 4**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

### Major strengths

- A wide range of opportunities enable all children and young people, including those from vulnerable backgrounds, to participate fully in decision making at all levels. This is regarded as a high priority by all partners who directly engage with and respond to users' views. For example, there is 95% positive involvement of looked after children in their reviews. Young people at the SPACE information, advice and counselling service have directly influenced developments in CAMHS services through consultation. The city-wide representative group of young people, Voices in Action, links directly to the Children and Young People's Executive and ensures that young people's voices are heard at a strategic level.
- The council's efforts to reduce youth offending behaviour and re-offending rates have delivered excellent results, evidenced by performance indicators, putting Derby City well above the performance in similar councils.

- Comprehensive anti-bullying strategies have been effective in reducing incidents of bullying in schools. Children and young people's views have informed local developments in terms of increasing youth opportunities and transport links to access safe youth activities.

**Important weaknesses and areas for development**

**Achieving economic well-being**

**Grade 3**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

**Major strengths**

- The percentage of children and young people engaged in education, employment and training remains consistently better than for similar councils, including for vulnerable groups. In particular, the percentage of care leavers entering into education, employment and training is significantly better than found nationally.
- The success rate for all groups of work based learners, including those in apprenticeships remains good and consistently above national rates.
- Rigorous assessment and advice for children and young people with complex needs ensures they receive good support and assistance into training and employment.
- The trend of improvement in Level 2 achievement by age 19 has continued and the gap is closing.

**Important weaknesses and areas for development**

- The rate of progress with coordinated 14 to 19 developments across the city has slowed. There is an insufficient range of Diplomas available for the 14 to 19 age range.
- There is too much variation in Level 3 achievement by age 19 across the city.

**Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services**

**Grade 3**

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people and its management of these services are good. The council has been quick to respond to the issues raised in the JAR of 2007 and through sharp identification of priorities and careful, creative planning, made good progress against most outcomes. The trend of improvement across most outcomes is consistent, although standards and achievement at age 11 have been slow to improve, until very recently.

There is excellent shared ambition to improve the life chances of all children and young people and sharp identification of the priorities to achieve this. These are reflected in clear objectives, targets and detailed actions as outlined in the children and young people's plan which provides a clear strategic overview of the council's children's trust arrangements. The priorities identified in this plan are duly reflected in partnership plans across the service.

Openness, rigour and challenge are evident in tackling issues and improving outcomes for children and young people, particularly for those who are most vulnerable within the community. Service providers and partners are very clear about their roles and contributions to the shared improvement agenda.

Clear priority is given to narrowing the gap for vulnerable groups in improving outcomes. Liaison with vulnerable children and young people and their carers is excellent in ensuring they are actively involved in identifying their needs and subsequent planning, and in reviewing the services they receive.

Targets are realistic but ambitious. Self-evaluation is rigorous and mostly accurate. Analysis of performance data is used well to check on progress. Performance management has significantly improved since the previous APA and is now comprehensive and effective. This high level of scrutiny has led to significant improvements, particularly in the 'being healthy' outcome since the JAR of 2007.

There is visible and highly effective leadership at all levels in the Children and Young People's Service which creates a strong team ethic and is successfully engaging staff and partners in pursuing a common agenda and shared priorities.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continued strong leadership and clear direction underpins the work of Derby City's Children and Young People's Service.</li> <li>▪ There is a very strong commitment to effective partnership working. This has created positive working relationships between partners. Liaison with a range of community and voluntary partners is strong and effective.</li> <li>▪ The council is particularly successful in fulfilling its corporate parenting role with the vast majority of outcomes for looked after children better than for comparator groups.</li> <li>▪ Robust and highly effective performance management arrangements, including the routine involvement of children and young people, are now embedded across all services.</li> </ul> |
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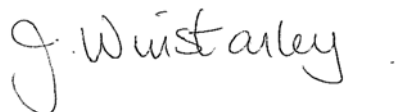
<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There has been insufficient sustained impact over time on the standards and achievement of children and young people at key points within the 'enjoy and achieve' outcome. This has remained adequate overall in recent years. Whilst these indicators are now improving, consistently improved performance has yet to be achieved in order to establish an improvement trend.</li> </ul> |
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The children's services grade is the performance rating for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will also provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment to be published by the Audit Commission.

We are grateful for the information you provided to support this process and for the time given by you and your colleagues during the assessment.

Yours sincerely

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

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection