

04 December 2007

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

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN DERBY CITY COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment (APA) for your local authority, some aspects of which were conducted at the same time as the analysis stage of the joint area review (JAR). The 2006 APA informed the scoping of the JAR at the planning stage and the initial findings of the 2007 APA were taken into account by the review team at the end of the analysis stage. The outcomes of the JAR were then considered alongside a review of recent data in arriving at the final APA judgements for 2007. As a result, many of the areas for development highlighted in this letter align with the recommendations in the JAR report and should be similarly aligned in any future action plan produced by the council and its partners. The judgements in the letter also draw on your assessment of progress or review of the Children and Young People's Plan and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted and other inspectorates. We are grateful for the information you provided to support this and for the time given by you and your colleagues to the assessment process.

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 3

The overall effectiveness of the council's contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people is good. The work of Children and Young People's Services is underpinned by strong leadership, clear direction and good partnership working. A good level of service has led to a number of improvements. For example, a range of partnerships are supporting improvements in the health of children and young people and robust and effective procedures are implemented to keep them safe; there is outstanding involvement of children and young people, including those who are vulnerable and hard-to-reach. Significant improvements were made in educational attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 in 2006; this has dipped in 2007 prompting careful analysis and planned strategies to regain previous improvements. The economic wellbeing of young people is improving: the percentage of young people over 16 in employment, education and training is increasing to meet challenging targets.

Effective partnership working is providing increasing and varied pathways for students from 14 to 19. The council is aware of its strengths and areas to develop and has good capacity to improve.

Being healthy

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this area is good. Healthy lifestyles have been encouraged by a range of initiatives with good multi-agency involvement. Over 97% of schools are engaged in the Healthy Schools programme. The Healthy Schools partnership has achieved Beacon status, with some innovative work being carried out with hard-to-reach groups of children and young people. A good example is the 'Body Image' project where work has been carried out to improve self perception of young people through a series of school and youth centre workshops.

Parents and carers are well served by many services aimed at improving parenting skills and support to parents. The 'Health Led Parenting Project', now known as the Family Nurse Partnership, funded by the Department of Health and the Department for Children, Schools and Families, targets 100 of the most vulnerable parents and operates across the five wards with highest deprivation factors. The integrated service pilot project is cutting down unnecessary demarcation between professionals, with service users having improved access to appropriate and timely services. There is a strong commitment to preventative services.

Relationship and sexual health services are provided in a number of ways so as to enable the widest range of young people to be reached. Examples include outreach projects such as 'Angels' (girls' group), 'Spaceman' (information service for boys and young men) and 'The Space' (a multi-agency information service for young people), which piloted a counselling service for Black and minority ethnic young people.

Derby was in the first wave of authorities using local area agreements to align and pool budgets. In total, £13.2m (73%) of the pooled funding is within the children and young people's block. The flexibility of this funding has allowed the authority to redirect £329,500 in 2005–06 and £593,000 in 2007 to meet priorities, including external consultancy support to review the teenage pregnancy strategy, teenage pregnancy work with boys and young men, and enhanced Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to children who are looked after. New teenage pregnancy figures show an improvement, but continue to be a priority for action. The partnership has introduced some innovative measures to tackle this issue, including work with young fathers and outreach work with Black and minority ethnic communities.

Primary care trust structures are in place to support the development of an integrated model of care. This will have a particular impact on the CAMHS service which has been an area of development in previous APA letters. The CAMHS partnership appointed a workforce learning and development coordinator in 2006. Waiting times for specialist CAMHS still fluctuate and are affected by low staffing. This service continues to be a focus of the partnership.

Performance on health and dental checks of children who are looked after was 88.1% in 2005–2006 (data from the primary care screening programme). A Band 5 (very good) performance has been maintained for 2006–07 with performance improving to 88.9% for the year. This exceeds the council's target for the period and is above England and East Midlands averages.

The integrated service for disabled children with complex needs is an area of strength. Children and families report high levels of satisfaction with the service, which is provided through The Lighthouse, a purpose-built integrated disabled children's facility. This meets the care planning needs of individual children and contributes to the partnership commissioning of new services and developments.

Increasing numbers of staff (currently over 1100) are trained in the common assessment framework and an increased number of staff from different agencies now takes on the lead professional role.

Areas for development

- Reduce teenage pregnancies.
- Reduce the waiting times for CAMHS.

Staying safe

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The Derby Safeguarding Children Board is well established with wide representation, good attendance, a well developed business plan and clear terms of reference. The new safeguarding procedures are well supported by a comprehensive multi-agency training programme. Partnership working in this area is strong.

There has been one serious case review in the last two years. This has resulted in an action plan and learning has been incorporated into training. For example, the domestic violence unit has been strengthened and the police have implemented a zero tolerance policy to incidents of domestic violence.

Some of the key developments in 2006–07 have been: implementing new safeguarding procedures jointly with Derbyshire County Council; strengthening existing links with

multi-agency public protection arrangements and the Domestic Violence Partnership; developing the work of the Stay Safe outcome group to promote well-being; providing awareness raising training for faith groups; and setting up a performance monitoring framework.

The number of re-registrations on the child protection register (an area subject to audit over the last year) has continued to reduce. Robust and effective review procedures ensure that all cases on the child protection register are reviewed in accordance with the guidelines. The timeliness of reviews of children in care has improved significantly from 68.5% to 84%, which is now above the statistical neighbour average. This is as a result of the local authority's successful strategy to improve the figure from the previous year.

High numbers of children are adopted, but there are delays in placing some children for adoption. The stability of placements is very good. Decreasing numbers of children who are looked after, especially those from children's homes, are out of education for long periods of time.

Although all looked after children are allocated to a key worker, not all are qualified. The authority's view is that the use of community care workers, supervised by qualified managers, was a sensible way to deal with earlier staffing shortages, and this solution has proved satisfactory in practice. It is now time to review this in the light of the current success in recruitment and retention.

All child protection and looked after children reviews are independently chaired and take place in the child's home with carers present wherever possible. The timeliness of core assessments remains very good (Band 5 - over 89%). The timeliness of initial assessments is slightly below the average for statistical neighbours, having slipped by 10% since the previous year. This is attributed by the authority to difficulties in implementing the new computer system in some locations, resulting in data input problems.

Areas for development

- Audit and review the cases of children waiting for adoption to see whether adoption is now a realistic choice.
- Review the policy of using unqualified workers for looked after children.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect remains adequate with some good features. Foundation Stage profile scores are improving; the gap closed from 25.2% to 24.3% between the lowest performing and the city average in 2006. Overall results are broadly in line with national averages.

Key Stage 1 and 2 attainments continue to be below national averages and statistical neighbours. Results at Key Stage 1 dropped at a slightly greater rate than statistical neighbours and national averages, particularly in reading and writing. They were more in line with comparator groups in maths.

Key Stage 2 results remained broadly static, with English and science below comparator groups and mathematics below the national average but broadly in line with similar authorities. Therefore despite the authority's continuing focus on improving attainment at Key Stages 1 and 2, progress has been limited.

There were significant improvements at Key Stages 3 and 4 in 2006. Key Stage 3 results in English and maths improved above statistical neighbours and national averages. Similarly Key Stage 4 results improved: the percentage gaining 5 A*–C grades was below the national average but above statistical neighbours. The average points score and the capped points score were above similar authorities and closing on national averages. Good support is provided to enable vulnerable children and young people to enjoy and achieve, for example, a greater number of children and young people, with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in secondary schools, make good progress than in statistical neighbour groups. The educational performance of children who are looked after is good against most outcome comparators.

The authority has clearly established procedures to monitor and support schools. However progress in three of the area's primary schools in a category of concern has been slower than anticipated. The authority accepts this and has robust plans in place to appropriately support and challenge schools to improve within a reasonable timeframe. Part of the improvement strategy includes the work of school improvement partners. These are in place in primary schools and are aware of the priority to challenge and support schools to raise standards, particularly at Key Stages 1 and 2.

Good partnership working is having a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people. For example, previously improved attendance levels have been maintained, with attendance at secondary level remaining above local and national averages. Exclusions have continued to reduce in primary schools, although the previous reduction achieved in secondary schools has not been sustained in 2006/07. The development of vocational curriculum pathways from 14–19 provides young people with increased opportunities to continue in education or training beyond the age of sixteen.

School inspection judgements about learners' enjoyment and achievement are broadly comparable with similar authorities, although there are fewer outstanding judgements. Children and young people's enjoyment of school is good or better in 89% of secondary school inspections, which is considerably better than statistical neighbours.

Good progress has been made with extended schools provision; there are clear partnership strategies to improve opportunities and activities for children and young people, including hard-to-reach and vulnerable groups. The local authority takes good account of the needs and wishes of children and young people in its planning of social education and recreational activities. The take up of such activities is good with the

Youth Service reaching 36.8% of young people, a higher figure than found nationally and exceeding the national target.

Areas for development

- Improve Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 standards and achievement.
- Reduce secondary exclusions.
- Provide effective challenge and support to schools causing concern in order to achieve required improvements within a reasonable timeframe.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 4

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding.

There are secure mechanisms in place to ensure that children and young people have an opportunity to express their views. A strong commitment to consult widely with children and young people about key issues and ensure their voice is heard, results in excellent outcomes. A good example of this is the Youth Shadow Board, which is fully representative of young people in the area and contributes well to strategic planning.

The Youth Service is very effective in reaching proportionately more young people than found nationally. The service has responded well to the need to involve young people in reviewing and planning their learning following the Youth Service Inspection report of 2005. The strategic lead in this work was initiated and successfully developed by one of the service's young participants. Together with this service, there are a number of support agencies and voluntary organisations working effectively together to encourage young people to make a positive contribution. Student councils are in place in every school. There is a strong commitment to encourage involvement in voluntary activities. Over 3200 children and young people are involved in such activities, including a Mentoring Transitions project in Normanton, Millennium Volunteers, faith groups and a wide variety of school-based activities.

The council is particularly vigorous in seeking the views of young people, in order to shape services. 10,000 young people have completed pupil perception surveys over the past three years. Their issues and concerns are taken seriously, for example in developing the current anti-bullying strategy. Bullying is recognised as a significant issue for some children and the authority has developed a range of strategies to address this. A number of services are engaged in supporting the social and emotional developments of children and young people. Initiatives include the Friends Against Bullying scheme in secondary schools, Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning in primary schools, nurture groups and child and family support workers in schools to support emotional wellbeing. Data gathered over the past two years shows that this work is having a positive impact

in improving young people's confidence and self esteem. School inspections found that secondary schools, in particular, are supporting good personal and social development. In secondary inspections 78% gained judgements of good or better for the personal development and wellbeing of learners, which is significantly better than those for statistical neighbours. Similarly, judgements about behaviour in secondary schools at inspection are significantly better than for statistical neighbours.

There is very good engagement with vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of children and young people, and a strong commitment to consult with them in making key decisions about their lives. For example, the engagement of children and young people with disabilities, and their parents, in transition planning for adult life is excellent. The youth offending team is achieving good outcomes in reducing the numbers of first time offenders to below comparator groups. The number of young people re-offending is less than for statistical neighbours or nationally.

The number of looked after children who participate in their reviews is higher than similar authorities and the national average, with 92% from the area participating in 2006/07. The percentage of looked after young people who receive a final warning or reprimand continued to fall to 1.8%, which is lower than for similar authorities and for England as a whole.

Area for development

- Continue to develop anti-bullying strategies to support children and young people.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. There are good strategic structures and processes to support effective partnership working.

Services are providing increasing support and advice for parents. For example, The Children's Information Service is now established in the city. This supports The Childcare Strategy which will prepare the local authority for its duty to provide sufficient affordable childcare. A sufficiency audit is underway; at present registered provision continues to grow, increasing the number of childcare places available, which is improving the support for working parents. Good support and advice is provided for settings and subsequently the quality of provision is improving.

A range of curriculum initiatives provide alternative experiences for young people at risk of disengagement with the academic curriculum. For example, pilot intervention work is being undertaken in one area of the city with children and young people in Years 7 and 8 who are deemed to be potentially vulnerable. However, improving literacy and numeracy skills in primary schools remains a key focus for the authority to provide a secure foundation for future workplace skills.

Educational opportunities for young people from 14–19 are widening. Substantial investment is being made into Derby College to improve provision and increase the range of opportunities available. There are a number of examples of good partnership working resulting in increased provision post 14 and the expansion of 14–19 pathways. For example, there has been a significant increase in the number of young people completing apprenticeships. In particular the apprenticeship scheme with Rolls Royce is proving to be very successful. Following this, three further Young Apprenticeship schemes have been developed. The NVQ success rate for work based learners starting their courses under the age of 19 has significantly increased to higher than the national figure.

There has been an increase in the numbers of young people aged 16–18 who are in education, employment or training to better levels than statistical neighbours, in response to challenging targets. This results from good partnership work with Connexions, schools and training providers and the Learning and Skills Council. Work to increase the numbers of young people from vulnerable groups who are engaged in education, employment or training is a clear priority. Good outcomes are being achieved for most groups: the number of teenage mothers, and care leavers who are engaged in such activity is higher than for similar authorities. However, the number of young people aged 16–18 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are not in education, employment or training has reduced but remains higher than for comparator groups.

A range of partner organisations such as the Oasis project, English Churches Housing Association, YMCA and Connexions are supporting vulnerable groups. The Key Steps package supports young people, referred from the Youth Offending Service, and links training and education with sustaining tenancy in suitable accommodation.

There were steady improvements in achievement by the under 19s, at Level 2 and 3, during 2004–2006; however, the authority recognises that this is an ongoing priority as achievements remain below statistical neighbour and national figures.

Areas for development

- Reduce the numbers of young people aged 16–18, with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who are not in education, employment or training.
- Continue to improve the attainment of post 16 students.
- Improve the contribution that primary schools make to children's workplace skills through improvements in literacy and numeracy levels.

Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The capacity to improve, including the council's management of services is good. Strong strategic leadership, together with a clear vision has provided good direction for the work of children's services. There is shared leadership and commitment amongst the senior team. Shared aspiration and purpose are evident, both across the department and from external partner agencies.

The review of the 2006 Children and Young People's Plan is thorough. It accurately identifies strengths and areas for further action, taking into account the views of children and young people. Priorities for action are clearly identified and ambition is strong. Effective partnership working is ensuring good progress in most outcomes. There is a clear movement towards integrated services, with the retention of appropriate specialism. The council is innovative in developing initiatives which are beginning to have a good impact on outcomes for children and young people, particularly for those who are looked after and care leavers. Effective corporate parenting is a strong feature of the council.

Resources are carefully allocated to support priorities and address needs; the good outcomes evident in the majority of areas indicate effective delivery. Good use is made of data to inform where interventions should be made. Financial management is good. Careful identification of performance against costs is made, together with detailed analysis of where further funding allocations should be targeted to meet needs. In the interests of efficiency, the authority recognises the need to review the position with regard to surplus places in schools.

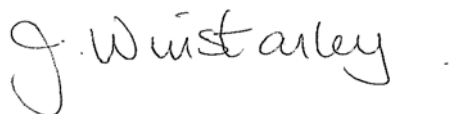
There is good continuity in staffing and a commitment to ongoing staff training and development. Performance management has been introduced and is developing securely.

Areas for development

- Continue to embed performance management including performance surgeries.
- Review surplus places in schools and reduce as appropriate.

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.

Yours sincerely

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

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection