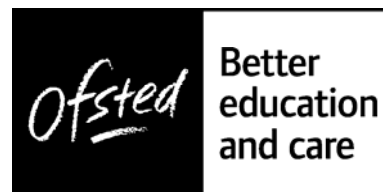


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Making Social Care  
Better for People



Ms Hannah Miller, Director of Social Services  
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**1 November 2006**

Dear Ms Miller and Mr Wylie

## **2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment (APA) 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**

<b>Areas for judgement</b>	<b>Grade awarded<sup>1</sup></b>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	<b>3</b>
The council's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	<b>3</b>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	<b>3</b>

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<b>Grade</b>	<b>Service descriptors</b>	<b>Capacity to improve descriptors</b>
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

Croydon local authority makes a good contribution to maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people, including its very high population of looked after children and unaccompanied asylum seeker children. All services show improvement in the achievement and well-being of children and young people but there remain areas for development. There is an effective Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) that is supported by good multi-agency working. The authority has a good capacity to improve.

## **Being healthy**

The authority makes a good contribution towards improving the health of children and young people. It works closely with health partners to identify and meet health needs. The Children's Trust continues to lead on the development and implementation of joint working arrangements. A broad range of initiatives is in place to promote healthy lifestyles in schools, including a sports partnership programme and a focus on reducing obesity in children and young people. There has been good progress with primary schools achieving the Healthy Schools Standard, but the rate of accreditation in secondary schools is below that of other authorities. A Healthy Schools Link Advisor has been appointed to provide additional support.

The rate of teenage conceptions amongst 15 to 17 year olds has increased and is higher than neighbouring authorities. However, within this group, the rate for under-16 year olds is reducing. The authority has worked hard to promote professional and public awareness in this area, as well as improving the accessibility of sexual health services. A new outreach service was established last year, which has seen over 650 young people.

Access to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAHMS) has improved through earlier intervention and reduced waiting times for non-acute services. Progress towards a comprehensive service is good. Young people with severe and complex mental health needs receive integrated support through the Youth Inclusion Support Panel. Improved help is available to parents and carers of children and young people with attention deficit disorder. A comprehensive plan is in place to extend the full range of services to include children and young people with learning disabilities.

The particular health needs of children and young people are being met well. Annual health checks for looked after children are consistently delivered to a very high level. Unaccompanied asylum seeker children who are experiencing trauma or who are leaving care receive targeted support from the Leaving Care Team. Young offenders with substance misuse problems receive a timely response from early intervention and treatment services.

## **Staying safe**

The authority makes a good contribution to securing the safety of children and young people and outcomes are improving.

The majority of schools inspected last year were found to have good or excellent arrangements for ensuring that children stay safe. A Child Protection Coordinator has been recruited specifically to work with schools and guidance on bullying will be issued to schools this year. There is evidence that childminding is of lower quality. At inspection, the number of action notices issued to childminders was higher than average.

Overall, child protection arrangements are working well. The numbers of children on the Child Protection Register has increased, but is in line with neighbouring authorities. All children on the child protection register have an allocated social worker and are reviewed on time. De-registrations, together with re-registrations, are comparatively good. The percentage of core assessments completed within time continues to be very good, although performance on initial assessments has significantly fallen.

A Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) was established in November 2005 and has successfully focused on promoting interagency working to safeguard children. Over the last year all serious case reviews have been reviewed independently; the production of a comprehensive overview report and action helps ensure that all interagency actions are scrutinised and monitored by the LSCB. This robust process has led to good quality, independent overview reports. However, the high level of scrutiny has led to significant delays in the timely completion of reviews.

The authority does well to deliver a broad range of services for the large and increasing population of looked after children, with over half being unaccompanied asylum seeker children. Most looked after children have an allocated social worker and monitoring mechanisms are in place for all children. The stability of care has improved overall, with children experiencing fewer placement moves. All looked after children have their care plans reviewed on time and all of those eligible have a personal advisor and pathway plans.

The majority of looked after children are now placed in foster placements or for adoption. The authority has successfully increased the recruitment and retention of foster carers and intends to place more children and young people locally. Although the numbers of adoptions have increased, these are still comparatively low. However, more children were placed for adoption within 12 months of their best interest decision being made.

The authority continues to ensure that children with a disability live in safe environments. All children and young people who receive a service from the Children with Disabilities Social Work Team have a comprehensive assessment and, when requested, this includes an assessment of their carer's needs. The very large majority of over 14 year olds have transition plans in place and a recent review has identified additional children who may benefit from such support. The council plans to address their needs through the commissioning of appropriate services.

The authority has successfully reduced the re-referral rate of children in need occurring within 12 months. However, the percentage of referrals that lead to initial assessments, as well as the number of core assessments undertaken, are all comparatively low.

## Enjoying and achieving

The authority makes an adequate contribution to ensuring children and young people achieve at school and enjoy their education. Although the impact of work is good in some areas it is not consistent. For example, there have been significant improvements in literacy, an area identified for improvement in the previous APA, but performance in mathematics and science is a concern and contributes to variable progress in the number of schools below floor targets. Additionally the performance of individual schools differs markedly. Summaries of school performance mask high and low achievement between schools and within different subjects in the same school.

Parents and carers receive good support. In Croydon there are sufficient day care places to satisfy demand and 80% of all three-year-olds are in nursery education. The promotion of overnight registration for child minders is a positive response to the needs of working parents. Croydon is on target to establish 17 children's centres. School admission arrangements have been made clearer and simplified.

The quality of early years' education is good overall and children make at least satisfactory progress from very varied starting points. With the exception of communication, language and literacy, children leave the Foundation Stage with attainment that is broadly in line with others of the same age. Key Stage 1 results overall improved slightly in 2005 and are broadly in line with national averages but standards in mathematics are below statistical neighbours. Children make adequate progress overall between Key Stages 1 and 2. By Year 6, standards in English are slightly above comparators and good in writing, which demonstrates good progress. However, standards are below average in mathematics and well below average in science. The trend of improvement in these subjects is slow.

There are indications that the intensive support programme is making some difference at Key Stages 1 and 2. Targeted support has resulted in improvements in reading and writing. Sixteen learning networks also focus on mathematics and literacy and arrangements for transition to Year 1 have been strengthened. Close monitoring and intervention strategies are addressing underachievement of some black and minority ethnic groups. However, the primary leadership programme had only modest success and has sensibly been cutback. The impact of intervention has been limited in mathematics and there is very little support to improve weaknesses in science.

Results at Key Stages 3 and 4 are improving rapidly in some areas and commitment to improving performance is high. Intensified support programmes and partnership with the London Challenge are making an impact. At Key Stage 3 standards are broadly in line with the national average but they are significantly below statistical neighbours in mathematics and science. Similarly, progress between key stages is broadly average. However, there is a large difference in the performance of schools. For example, ten schools are in the top 25% for progress between Key Stages 3 to 4 but seven are in the bottom 25%. The percentage of young people achieving 5 A\* to C GCSEs or equivalent examinations is average overall, but when GCSE results include mathematics and English the results are lower than statistical neighbours. Almost 98% of young people achieve one or more GCSE which is significantly above the national picture. Underperformance by boys and some

black and minority ethnic pupils is being addressed through the implementation of the black pupils' achievement project and targeted support.

There is effective support for schools made subject to a category of concern. The number of schools in special measures has reduced over time, although the proportion causing concern remains higher than comparative authorities. However, one secondary school has recently been placed in special measures. There are good procedures for monitoring and challenging schools.

School inspections judged outcomes for children with learning difficulties and disabilities to be good overall in primary schools, satisfactory in secondary schools and outstanding in special schools. A high proportion of children are placed out of the borough and, appropriately, a strategy is in place to educate more children in local schools by supporting schools to become more inclusive, training practitioners to meet complex needs, and realigning expenditure. The performance of looked after children has improved considerably, 55% gain one or more GCSEs or equivalent. This is especially good given the very high proportion of unaccompanied asylum seeker children. The percentage of looked after children who sit GCSE examinations is higher than comparators and the number gaining 5 A\* to C GCSEs is also greater than average. There is good focus on this group. Link inspectors routinely discuss performance and provision with headteachers.

Attendance has improved but is still low because authorised absence is above average. However, the number of looked after children who are absent from school for more than 25 days is lower than the national figure. Good partnership arrangements, close monitoring and the robust use of sanctions all contribute to improvement. In contrast, the rate of exclusions is too high. While targeted initiatives contributed to a fall in fixed-term exclusions, the number of permanent exclusions has risen in secondary schools. This is despite high numbers of young people taking up a range of curriculum options tailored to their needs. The proportions of excluded pupils from black and minority ethnic groups and those who have a statement of educational need remain a concern.

Opportunities for recreational and voluntary learning are good. A relatively high percentage of the large population of 13 to 19 year olds is involved with the youth service and 1,500 young people achieve accreditation.

### **Making a positive contribution**

The authority makes a good contribution towards improving outcomes for children and young people although outcomes are in this area are only adequate. Most children and young people are very well supported in managing changes in their lives. The proportion of looked after children who contribute their opinions at reviews has increased as well as the percentage of reviews completed within statutory timescales. The authority has put in place strategies to help children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to manage the transition between specific phases. They are consulted regarding their own needs and about appropriate provision, and encouraged to attend reviews and participate in work-related and enterprise programmes.

Youth crime is comparatively high. However, the number of young people entering the youth justice system has fallen, with a wide range of initiatives in place to combat offending. The rate of re-offending is below the national average. Targeted support is given to the most persistent of offenders; 40 young people were helped last year. At 60% the rate of remands is higher than the target figure of 38% due to the high level of youth arrests for serious crimes. The multi-disciplinary Youth Inclusion and Support Panels supported 150 vulnerable young people at risk of offending through a wide range of coordinated measures.

The authority has successfully involved children and young people in the planning and evaluation of services supported by the introduction of the 'Hear by Right' standard. Extensive consultation is evident in the development and production of the CYPP. An increasing participation project is in place to work with children who are in the care of the authority, aged 5 to 13.

Young people are encouraged to make a positive contribution by taking part in volunteering, with a good number of 'millennium' volunteers registered last year. School inspections found that young people's contribution to the community was good. Peer mentoring has been developed in a number of schools and in the Leaving Care Service.

### **Achieving economic well-being**

The authority makes a good contribution to improving children and young people's economic well-being. At GCSE/VCE standards are broadly in line with the national picture. Progress, from starting points is satisfactory based on point scores per GCSE entry and, although the average point score is well below national and statistical neighbours, it is improving.

The authority is working in partnership with a range of providers to offer improved accreditation opportunities at Level 2 and Level 3. There is an effective 14–19 forum. A borough-wide prospectus outlines all options for post-16 year olds, including work -based learning. Collaborative working is strong and flexible and learning programmes have been developed, including the young apprenticeship programmes. Planning for the new specialised diplomas has already begun.

The percentage of young people in education, employment and training (EET) has increased. As a result of improved tracking procedures, better programmes and the work of Connexions advisers, the rate of improvement in this area is greater than that of comparators and ahead of target, although numbers remain below average. Participation rates in further education and training are good and above the national average for 16 and 17 year olds. However, the number of young people participating in work-based learning is relatively low. Recent analysis indicates that more young offenders are engaged in EET than previously. This is because there is greater focus on preventative work and, importantly, the authority has established a strategy group, analysed needs and planned a good range of related responses. The comparatively high percentage of 16-18 year olds not known to Connexions is reducing rapidly. For example, improved tracking has

increased the registration of teenage mothers who are not in education, employment or training.

The engagement of young people leaving care is very good because of interagency support, the young people's involvement in planning for their futures and the employability scheme. The number of young people with learning difficulties who find and keep a job is well above the national average but the number in EET is less than the target and improvement planning is in place.

Croydon has significantly reduced homelessness and although there is proportionately more suitable housing for young people needing high levels of support than average, there remains a shortage. The uptake of direct payments to parents and carers of disabled children has improved. Childcare providers are developing flexible packages to meet the needs of parents and carers. Over 700 parents and carers attended family learning classes to improve basic skills and a recent inspection of adult learning judged provision as outstanding.

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

Overall, the management of children's services is good. Outcomes for service users are improving. The authority has worked hard and successfully to address most of the recommendations of the APA last year. In some instances repeat requirements were made during the inspections of the council's regulated services. These have now been fully addressed. Plans are in place to restructure the authority's education and social care departments and to create a Directorate of Children's Services with full implementation from spring 2007. The capacity for further improvement is good. Strong commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people is reflected in the CYPP, 2006-09. It details clear priorities and targets, which were developed as a result of consultation with children, young people and their families. All the one year actions have been jointly agreed and are achievable within existing resources. The plan will be monitored through reports to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, PCT Board and council's cabinet. The Partnership, Commissioning and Performance Unit has been established to ensure that the framework for joint commissioning is applied in a coherent and consistent way across partner agencies and that expenditure is properly aligned with priorities. This will provide the basis for future pooling arrangements.

Interagency working is well established, with some good examples of joint working that have led to improved outcomes for children and young people, particularly in the area of youth offending and the educational achievement of looked after children. Integrated teams align inclusion and school improvement work.

Financial control is effective and expenditure is linked to priorities. Personal Social Services expenditure has increased year-on-year, although per capita spending is comparatively low in some areas, for example, adoption services. Relative spending on family support is comparatively good. The cost of services for looked after children is comparatively low and represents good value for money. However out of borough and non-maintained school placements for children with learning difficulties and disabilities are costly. The council is

aware of this and plans are in hand to increase facilities within the borough and realign expenditure.

Performance management systems are robust and link business planning and monitoring. However, the plan for a single performance management framework is not fully in place.

Recruitment and retention of social care staff is comparatively good, although vacancy and sickness levels have increased. The vast majority of staff working with children in need are suitably skilled and qualified, although not all social workers and residential managers possess the post qualification award in childcare.

The work of the school improvement team is effective but there are vacancies at senior manager level, which affect capacity. Recruitment is underway. The number of part-time consultants is high and staffing levels are relatively low in some areas. A consultant from London Challenge has been seconded to augment senior management capacity for school improvement.

## Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• annual health checks for looked after children</li> <li>• services for unaccompanied asylum seeker children</li> <li>• partnership working/ Children's Trust</li> <li>• improved access and good progress towards a comprehensive CAMHS service.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduce teenage conceptions</li> <li>• development of the full CAMHS service to include children and young people with a learning disability</li> <li>• progress of secondary schools in achieving the Healthy Schools standard.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interagency working</li> <li>• all child protection cases allocated; timely reviews; de-registration and re-registration rates</li> <li>• timely core assessments</li> <li>• most children in local foster placements or placed for adoption; stability of placements for looked after children; timely reviews; pathway plans</li> <li>• transition planning for children and young people (14+ years) with disabilities</li> <li>• services for unaccompanied asylum seeker children.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• timely initial assessments</li> <li>• adoptions</li> <li>• response to referrals of children in need</li> <li>• commissioning of all serious case reviews for completion within timescales</li> <li>• reduction in actions issued for childminders.</li> </ul>



<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• rate of improvement at Key Stages 3 and 4</li> <li>• early years' education</li> <li>• performance in English</li> <li>• performance of looked after children</li> <li>• provision and outcomes for children with learning difficulties</li> <li>• support for schools in categories of concern</li> <li>• recreational activities.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• performance in maths at Key Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4</li> <li>• performance in science at Key Stages 2 and 3</li> <li>• standards in English at Key Stage 4</li> <li>• attainment of boys and those from some black and minority ethnic groups</li> <li>• authorised absence</li> <li>• exclusions.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• looked after children contributing their opinions to reviews; timeliness of reviews</li> <li>• participation framework/consultation with children and young people</li> <li>• initiatives to combat youth offending.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduction in youth victims of crime</li> <li>• reduction in the number of young people remanded.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• post-16 and 17 engagement in FE and training</li> <li>• fewer people not in EET</li> <li>• YOT strategies to increase EET</li> <li>• looked after children's in EET</li> <li>• children with LDD in EET</li> <li>• support for families, including family learning</li> <li>• uptake of direct payments.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• performance of some schools and providers</li> <li>• range of opportunities at post-16</li> <li>• work with lead partners to improve participation in work-based learning.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• commitment to improving outcomes</li> <li>• CYPP</li> <li>• interagency working; joint commissioning framework</li> <li>• stringent financial control</li> <li>• performance management and monitoring</li> <li>• retention of social care staff</li> <li>• emphasis on inclusion.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recruitment to the school improvement team</li> <li>• requirements from inspection of regulated services addressed within timescales.</li> </ul>

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

- Timely referrals, reviews and responses relating to the needs of vulnerable groups.
- Capacity for school improvement; particularly in relation to raising standards in mathematics and science.
- Attendance and exclusions.
- Implementation of the restructuring of education and social care.

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.



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