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Mr Colin Green
Director of Children, Learning and Young People
Coventry City Council
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Dear Mr Green

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, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

Coventry City Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Coventry City Council perform well.

The majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. While very little provision is inadequate, there are relatively few settings and services that are outstanding. Secondary schools, special schools and the pupil referral units are a strength, with the very large majority judged to be at least good at their last inspection. The local authority fostering agency is outstanding and the adoption agency is good. Just under half of primary schools are good or better and three were judged to be inadequate in 2009/2010. Provision for 16- to 18-year-olds is more variable. It is good in special schools and in the majority of school sixth forms, but good in only two of the three further education colleges. Two of the three local authority children's homes are adequate and one is good.

A recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found some areas for development and no areas for priority action.

National performance measures show the very large majority of outcomes are in line or better than the averages for England or for similar areas. These include educational outcomes at the age of 11, 16 and 19. However, in 2009 nearly a fifth of primary schools did not achieve the minimum standards for educational attainment. Fewer children are permanently excluded from school than in similar local authorities. The proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds in education, training or work is better than in similar areas and in the top 25% of local authorities nationally. However, fewer young offenders go onto education, training or work than in other parts of the country. Teenage conceptions remain high and the rate of reduction is slower than nationally.

Key areas for further development

- Increase the number of primary schools that are good or better.
- Reduce the number of primary schools which do not meet the minimum standards of educational attainment.
- Take action to ensure that quality of children's homes remains at least good.

Provision to support children and young people in leading healthy lives is good or better in the very large majority of inspected services and settings. Most health outcomes are in line with those in similar areas or nationally. Obesity levels of children starting primary school and at the age of 11 are average for England. The number of children and young people who take part in physical activity and sport has continued to increase, in line with the national picture. The local partnership acknowledges that teenage conception rates remain persistently too high, despite

efforts to reduce them. This is a priority area of work for the local area; an improvement strategy is in place based on detailed analysis of local data, but initiatives to tackle this issue have yet to make an impact.

The very large majority of individual settings and services make a good contribution to keeping children and young people safe. The large majority of indicators are in line with those in similar areas and across the country. The recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found that senior managers had made improvements to the quality of services and performance, that risks to children were identified promptly and that plans for children with disabilities were good. The inspection also found that there were delays in responding to and recording some child in need cases and that the quality of initial assessments was variable. The reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents and hospital admissions caused by injuries to children and young people are average when compared to England as a whole. More children report that they experience bullying than in similar areas. Two of the three local authority children's homes, both previously good, were judged to be only satisfactory at their most recent inspection

Provision to help children achieve educationally and to enjoy learning is good or better in the very large majority of inspected settings and services. At the end of the Reception year children's attainment is in line with similar areas. Overall they make average progress throughout their primary education, though the quality of primary schools is variable. In 2009, 15 schools did not meet the minimum education standards though the local authority reports that this number has now reduced. In 2009, examination results at the age of 16 showed substantial improvement on previous years, bringing performance to slightly above the average for similar areas. Attendance and behaviour in secondary schools continue to improve and are also in line with similar areas.

The local authority involves children and young people, including those looked after and with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, in making decisions about services and contributing to shaping them, for example through the Children and Young People's Plan annual partnership day. The proportion of young people involved in sporting, cultural, recreational and volunteering activities is similar to that in other parts of the country and a higher percentage are involved in publicly-funded youth work activity than elsewhere. Permanent exclusions from school remain consistently lower than in similar local authorities and nationally. Fewer young people in Coventry re-offend than in similar areas.

The majority of settings and services provide good support in preparing young people for adult life. More young people in Coventry continue into education, work or training after the age of 16 than in similar areas. However, this is not the case for young offenders. Numbers achieving five higher level GCSEs or two A levels by the age of 19 have increased and reflect the average for similar areas, as does the percentage of young people from low-income backgrounds who progress to college or university after the age of 18. The local authority is making good progress in implementing the 14-19 reforms through comprehensive partnership agreements with providers and good quality information, advice and guidance to students. The

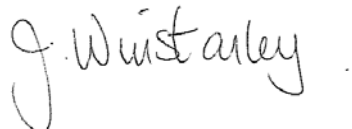
housing and accommodation needs of care leavers and young offenders are met adequately.

Prospects for improvement

Outcomes for children and young people are being sustained or improving in Coventry. The local authority's Children and Young People's Plan communicates a secure understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in services across the Partnership. It sets out very clearly what has been achieved, what needs to be done further and sets challenging targets for improvement. These include local priorities, for example improved support for asylum seeker, refugee and newly arrived families. Where there are more intractable issues the partnership has taken action to tackle the weaknesses, such as through its cross-agency strategy to reduce teenage conceptions. One of the three primary schools judged to be inadequate by Ofsted in the last year is not improving fast enough, although the local authority's support is judged to be satisfactory. While much is positive, too many primary schools are only satisfactory and there has been a deterioration in the quality of children's homes overall.

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, flowing style.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment