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Mr Colin Green
Director of Children, Learning and Young People
Coventry City Council
Civic Centre 1
Earl Street
Coventry
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Dear Mr Green

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Coventry 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.

Assessment judgement area	APA grade
Overall effectiveness of children's services	3
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	2
Enjoying and achieving	3
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

Coventry City Council is a good and improving council that consistently delivers above minimum requirement for children and young people, has some innovative practice and is increasingly cost effective while making contributions to wider outcomes for the community. There have been no schools in an Ofsted category of concern for five years and the fostering service was judged to be outstanding in January 2008. Large numbers of children and young people are regularly consulted about the services they receive in Coventry. More young people are engaged in youth work activities than many councils nationally.

There have been some impressive areas of improvement since the last APA. For example, the success in getting young people into substance misuse treatment. There has also been a decline in the number of young children involved in road accidents, a reduction in the number of young people offending and an improvement in school attendance figures. An increasing number of young people get involved in their local community, and more young people aged 16 continue in education, employment or training (EET).

The council has acted on the staying safe issues raised at the last APA. At that time, staying safe was judged to be adequate. Whilst the council has made some tangible improvements in this outcome area, a number of key performance indicators remain below similar council and national averages. For example, the allocation of qualified social workers to looked after children. Staying safe remains adequate but improving.

The council is accurate in assessing its future priorities and knows there is still work to be done to: reduce the number of teenage pregnancies; improve the placement stability and attainment of looked after children and pathway plans for care leavers, especially the older students; and reduce the number of 17-year-olds leaving education without a pathway to EET.

The management of the services has demonstrated that it has a good capacity to sustain improvement, due to its accurate self-evaluation, determined leadership, purposeful planning and use of more measurable success criteria. The weaker outcomes in the staying safe agenda have been recognised and the social care service has been re-organised to enable the needs of looked after children and children in need to be met more effectively.

Being healthy

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

- There has been a reduction in the rate of infant mortality to below similar council levels this year and closer to national averages.
- Good progress has been made with the Healthy Schools Programme, which is ahead of schedule in meeting nationally set targets. Participation at 99% is 3% ahead of the national average. Those achieving Healthy School Status has risen to 65%, thus meeting the December 2008 target ahead of schedule.
- The youth service Drugs Action Team has a strong commitment to providing preventative intervention programmes and has been successful this year in getting more young people into treatment for drugs misuse. The percentage of young people treated has increased and is now much higher than the average for similar councils.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Teenage pregnancy rates are reducing, but not quickly enough compared with similar councils and nationally. A new partnership board is in place and three new teenage pregnancy co-ordinators have been appointed to deliver the action plans.
- Whilst good dental health checks for looked after children have been maintained, there has been a downturn in the performance in annual health checks.

Staying safe

Grade 2

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

Major strengths

- Since the last APA there has been a steady improvement in a number of key indicators. For example, the percentage of looked after children with three or more placements during the year has improved for the fourth year running and is now in line with similar council and national comparators. All child protection cases were reviewed this year, meeting the key threshold and performing better than both nationally and similar councils.
- Preventative and early intervention services are in place and are having a positive effect on outcomes for children, young people and their families and carers. Referrals and repeat referrals to social care have seen a third year reduction and this indicator is now performing much better than nationally and similar councils for the first time in five years.
- There has been a reduction in the number of children aged 0 to 15 killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents. The council has exceeded the

Department for Transport's targets.

- There is good screening of domestic violence incidents, with a robust system in place including the location of a social worker in the police domestic violence unit.
- The council has a high quality fostering service, which was recently judged outstanding at inspection.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Initial assessments completed within seven working days continue to be too low. There has been a decrease for the second year to 43.9%, substantially below similar councils and nationally.
- The number of looked after children is high. The council acknowledges this is in part to some risk-averse practice. Social care services have recently been re-structured to ensure a more robust single point of access.
- Only 5% of looked after children have been adopted this year, which is lower than similar councils and nationally.
- The percentage of looked after children allocated a qualified social worker remains too low, below comparators for the fifth year running.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

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

Major strengths

- Attendance in primary and secondary schools has improved and is now in line with similar councils.
- The percentage of permanent exclusions of young people from secondary schools is much lower than similar council and national figures.
- The council has maintained its good support for schools and colleges and attainment continues to improve in all phases, closing the gap with national averages.
- The restructuring of the Early Years Foundation Stage service has led to improved monitoring, challenge and support in all early years settings. This has resulted in improvements in the quality of provision and inspection outcomes across the city.
- At Key Stage 2, attainment in English and science is above similar councils and in line in mathematics. There is also a faster trend of improvement than similar councils in mathematics.
- Attainment at Key Stage 4 has improved at almost twice the rate of similar councils and nationally since the last APA. The 2007 five or more A* to C GCSE

results were the highest ever for the council. Three quarters of secondary schools are now judged to be good or better.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Attainment in English at Key Stage 3 is 4% below national averages.
- The year-on-year change in the percentage of young people achieving five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics is lower than similar council and national figures.
- Low numbers of looked after children sat GCSEs or equivalent.

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

- Even more young people are now involved in supporting their local community. Young people are regularly consulted about the council's provision and tangibly have a role to play in shaping services. Of note is the significance the voice that young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have in helping others to appreciate their needs. A good example is the DVD about the challenges they face that was made for other students in mainstream schools.
- The positive destinations for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities rose from 82% in 2006 to 96% in 2007.
- The Youth Opportunities Fund, run by young people for young people, successfully allocated funding to 191 projects, benefiting over 7,600 young people.
- The increased involvement of young people has led to a reduction in crime. The Youth Justice Board (YJB) target in relation to recidivism has been exceeded by the Coventry Youth Offending Service. The service has achieved a 5.8% reduction which is 0.8% above the YJB target.
- The percentage of young people aged 13 to 19 who are reached by publicly funded youth services continues to be exceptionally high at 43%, significantly above national target of 25%.
- The percentage of looked after children who contributed towards their annual review has increased from 95% to 99% demonstrating outstanding performance, 10% higher than statistical neighbours and 8% above the England average.

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.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ofsted 14 to 19 survey judged the quality of information, advice, guidance and support to be good. Very detailed and comprehensive partnership agreements with providers and Connexions are well-linked to Every Child Matters themes with clear targets. ▪ Almost 300 sixth form students undertook effective and well-received Insight programmes into professional occupations. Most young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in special schools participated in a wide range of work experience and work related activities. ▪ The percentage of young people in EET at age 16 is high and has risen for the fourth consecutive year from 92.4% in 2006 to 94.3% in 2007, ranking Coventry as the sixth highest nationally. ▪ A 14 to 19 Ofsted survey inspection in January 2008 judged that the council was making good progress with some outstanding features in implementing the 14 to 19 reforms. ▪ At post-16, the percentage of students achieving level 2 has increased by 6% to 65%.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of 17-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is high. This area requires a reduction in order to achieve the overall 2010 NEET target. ▪ While there are now more Level 1 courses provided post-16, the range is not broad enough to take account of the increasing numbers and abilities of those staying on post-16. ▪ Performance on completion of Pathway Plans for young people leaving care is unacceptably low (44.6%), as are the number in EET.

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

Grade 3

Coventry City Council continues to demonstrate year-on-year improvement across its services. Its self-evaluation is accurate and sharply focused on needs analysis and use of data. It has a realistic view of its strengths and areas that require further development, and as such has a strong capacity to improve. The Director of Children's Services leads with vision and determination. The CYPP is clear and coherent with appropriate targets. Effective partnership working means that all partners agree the priorities and collaborative planning has become a strong driver

for improvement. The council is open and always seeking to improve on previous performance and there is an intelligent approach to service improvement.

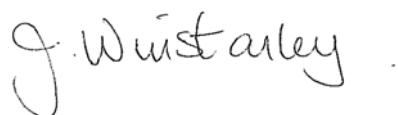
The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people and its management of these services is good. Coventry has demonstrated improvement since the last APA, in particular improving some aspects of social care, although there remains work to do. The recruitment of full-time social workers remains a challenge for the council and as a result they rely heavily on agency staff. Coventry has a good history of community development that is being well-used as part of the new agenda for the delivery of universal and specialist services into neighbourhood localities. These are having a positive effect on children, young people, their families and carers. There is a strong holistic approach to improvement supported by effective performance management in the council and through the children and young people's strategic partnership.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Strong partnership working.▪ Coherent planning and good history of community development.▪ Shared vision and inclusive philosophy.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The appointment of permanent social workers remains a poor performing indicator, much lower than comparators for the fifth year running. As a result, progress in improving staying safe outcomes has been too inconsistent.

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



Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection