

9 December 2009

Mr Richard Hubbard
Acting Director of Children, Young People and Families
Cornwall County Council
County Hall
Treyew Road
Truro
Cornwall TR1 3AY

Dear Mr Hubbard

Children's services annual rating

Ofsted guidance published in May 2009 explained that the annual rating would derive from a new performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the council has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant *Every Child Matters* indicators in the new National Indicator Set (NIS).

In considering the evidence in the profile to determine the children's services rating for 2009 it has become clear that the continuing gaps in the data are significant, particularly those relating to aspects of social care and services for Looked After Children. Ofsted has decided therefore to use 2009 as a transitional year easing into the full application of the new system in 2010. As a consequence, although the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's rating, we have interpreted the performance bands with flexibility and exercised professional judgement with caution.

The annual rating 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, a rating of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, a rating of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects.

Children's services rating 2009

Children's services rating	Performs poorly (1)
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Children's services in Cornwall County Council perform poorly.

Whilst the overall effectiveness of a majority of the local authority's services is good or better, there are significant weaknesses in provision for safeguarding and for looked after children. The majority of these weaknesses are in the local authority's children's social care service.

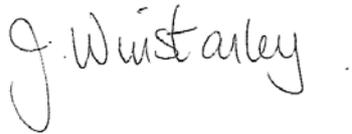
In the joint area review held in the summer of 2008, provision for safeguarding, for looked after children and for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, was all judged to be adequate, although a number of important weaknesses were identified within safeguarding provision. However, the unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in July 2009, identified areas requiring priority action which were deemed sufficient to limit the overall rating of the local authority's children's services to performing poorly. The subsequent inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services in September 2009, confirmed these weaknesses and identified others. It also judged provision for looked after children to be inadequate. Overall, these last two inspections revealed that, not only had provision for safeguarding and looked after children not improved since the joint area review, it had deteriorated markedly.

The overall effectiveness of a majority of inspected services and settings is good or better. There are relative weaknesses within this, in provision for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable, with the standard of provision in special schools, pupil referral units and children's homes all being well below the national average. However, the local authority's fostering and adoption services are good, as are measures to identify and monitor private fostering arrangements. Also, the very large majority of inspected services and settings is judged to make a good or better contribution to keeping children and young people safe and helping them to achieve educationally.

In terms of performance indicators, a very large majority of the local authority's figures is at least in line with the statistical neighbour and national averages. The gap in outcomes for children and young people whose circumstances make them vulnerable has widened in four of the six indicators over the past year.

The children's services rating is provided for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The rating of local authority children's services will contribute significantly to the managing performance theme of each local authority's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment and therefore to the score for each local authority overall.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA