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Making Social Care  
Better for People



Mr Dean Ashton  
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**1 November 2006**

Dear Mr Ashton

## **2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CORNWALL**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 Annual Performance Assessment 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 you 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.	2
The council's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	2
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	1

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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

Cornwall local authority delivers a service that generally satisfies minimum requirements and occasionally exceeds them. However, in the important aspect of keeping children safe, the service is inadequate. There is a strong commitment to partnership working and the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) is based on a thorough needs analysis, drawing on the views of young people. There is a shared vision across the service which has guided the creation of the new integrated children's services department. Some parts of the service are not yet sufficiently developed to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people. The impact of recent organisational change has been too slow in dealing with some of the issues identified for development in the last performance assessment. The capacity for further improvement of the service is adequate.

### **Being healthy**

The authority makes a good contribution towards improving the health of children and young people in the area. A large proportion of schools continue to participate in the Healthy Schools initiative. Schools are successful in encouraging young people to take part in sport and to eat healthily. Since September 2005, inspections show that in 80% of schools, their work is judged to be good or outstanding in enabling learners to be healthy. The work of the Healthy Schools programme has also contributed to a reduction in the conception rate for teenagers under the age of 18 years, which is now within reach of the national interim target. There are effective drug treatment plans in place for young people who are involved in substance misuse.

National initiatives to improve children's self-esteem and behaviour have been adopted widely by primary schools, and schools' initial feedback suggests these are having a positive impact.

During the past year, the local authority has put in place a multi-agency team for looked after children. One outcome has been to improve significantly the health care arrangements for looked after children. These are now good, with timely health and dental care checks in place. While the overall progress made towards Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is satisfactory, provision for non-acute mental health cases remains an area for development. There has been progress in joint working and the development of protocols and plans in non-acute cases, but this has not yet resulted in improved outcomes.

Children and young people with disabilities who use respite care units provided by the health trust do not routinely have their health care needs included in their care plans. Also, protocols to ensure appropriate transfer between paediatric and adult health care services, and between children, young people and family (CYPF) and adult social services departments, have not yet been agreed.

## Staying safe

Performance in this outcome area is inadequate.

The stability of placements for looked after children continues to be unsatisfactory. The proportion of children being moved three or more times in their first year remains unacceptably high and exceeded the government's key threshold for the second year running. However, the proportion of children who have been looked after for more than four years who remain in a stable foster placement is in line with average performance.

Initial child protection conferences, the numbers of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR) and the level of re-registrations have all risen since the 2004/5 performance year. The level of re-registrations on the CPR have fallen two bands from a 'very good' banding to an 'acceptable' banding, and numbers on the register have risen to levels well above those of comparator authorities. A small number of cases on the CPR were unallocated to a social worker in 2004/5, which represents a decline in performance since the previous year, when all cases were allocated. With the variable pattern of registrations and de-registrations, and the lack of a robust explanation for this performance, child protection practice is unsatisfactory.

While the numbers of looked after children have fallen, numbers of children in need have risen. Referrals have risen over the last three years to a rate which is significantly higher than comparator authorities. However, the proportion of initial referrals which lead to an assessment has decreased over the same number of years. The proportion of re-referrals has risen and is much higher than that for comparator authorities, and the rate of core assessments of children in need is twice the level of comparator authorities. Taken together, these indicators show that the gatekeeping thresholds being applied and the assessment processes are not working efficiently.

The children services inspection in February 2005 recommended that social workers in the children with disabilities team should be fully trained. A practice manager with child protection experience has been appointed and staff have received appropriate training.

The timing of initial and core assessments and reviews of child protection cases remain good. The participation of looked after children in their reviews, however, has fallen to a low level, without managers having a clear strategy for improving it.

Since September 2005, inspection findings show that the overwhelming majority of the schools inspected provided good or better care, guidance and support for children and young people.

A designated 'leaving care' team, set up in April 2005, has led to a notable improvement in services, with an increase in pathway plans for children. This has enabled the authority's performance to approach that of comparator authorities.

The proportion of children from black and minority ethnic groups on the CPR is now similar to that in the local population. However, the authority acknowledges it has a long way to go before the needs of its black and minority ethnic population are reflected fully in its work. In particular, social services have made no progress on the urgent recommendation, in the February 2005 service inspection, to assess the impact of race equality issues on all its policies and services.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

The contribution that the authority's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is adequate, with several strengths. Early years provision continues to be good and includes an increasing number of children's centres. Attainments at Key Stage 2, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are broadly in line with the national average. Performance at Key Stage 1, particularly in reading and writing, continues to be lower than in similar authorities, although there is a trend of improvement over the last three years. Added value data show young people make the expected progress. Their achievement was good or better in just over half of the 25 schools inspected since September 2005. However, more able children and young people underachieve at all key stages when compared with their peers nationally.

School improvement work is effective and demonstrates strong capacity for raising standards. The authority has an accurate view of the areas for improvement. A range of national strategies and local initiatives is being used to raise the achievement of pupils in Key Stage 1 and of higher achieving pupils generally. There is some evidence that this work is beginning to have a positive effect. The local authority regards tackling weaknesses in its provision in pupil referral units as a high priority. Three have been placed in special measures since September 2005. Appropriate plans for improvement are being developed. The local authority is also conducting a review of their longer-term role in relation to wider provision for excluded pupils in the county and for those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Looked after children have a very good attendance rate, which is well above the national average. They also continue to do well in GCSE examinations. Although there was a slight fall from the previous year, results are still higher than for looked after children nationally.

Provision in special schools for children with learning difficulties and disabilities is of a high standard. Recent inspections judged the three schools to be good or better in all areas of their work.

The authority is making progress in reducing the number of pupils excluded from school, which was identified as an area for improvement in the last performance assessment. The social inclusion service has worked successfully to improve procedures and encourage schools to consider options other than exclusion. Unauthorised absences are below average for secondary schools. In the last school year, the number of authorised absences was high in both primary and secondary schools. The educational welfare service has used a wide range of resources and strategies to raise parents' awareness and worked closely with schools to improve attendance. Both these

services use data very effectively to target resources and monitor the success of strategies.

### **Making a positive contribution**

The contribution that the authority's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is adequate. The authority has consulted widely in drawing up its Children and Young People's Plan. A large proportion of schools have school councils and a youth forum is linked with each local area group of the Children and Young People's Plan. Pupils in many schools are involved in the appointment of new headteachers; looked after young people are involved in the appointment of key staff. Recent inspections show that the majority of the schools inspected were successful in helping children and young people make a positive contribution.

The work of the Youth Offending Team is of high quality. It is successful in working with other partners and has helped to reduce the rate of re-offending below that of comparator authorities.

The children's services inspection in February 2005 highlighted a number of weaknesses, not all of which have been tackled. It recommended that the advocacy service be extended to include children with disabilities. Financial limitations mean that the service is restricted to those children with disabilities who are either looked after children or those who are on the CPR. The number of looked after children contributing to their reviews has fallen to a low level, below that of comparative authorities.

A further recommendation called for the local authority to 'urgently undertake race equality impact assessments on all policies and services'. The authority recognises that this has yet to be completed and that its performance in tackling diversity matters has been historically weak. Recent corporate training has been provided to ensure that structures and plans should deal more effectively with such issues in the future. Although progress and impact so far have been limited, work has begun on implementing initiatives in schools as a result of visits made to other authorities.

The authority's management information on children with disabilities is insufficiently accurate, with the result that managers are unable to monitor this provision closely. For example, there was a sharp fall in the number of 14+ transition plans which took place for children with disabilities. Managers suggest this under represents the actual situation but are unable to provide evidence to support their view. The council has started to integrate services for disabled children across education and social care and plans for further integration with health services. These developments are not yet improving outcomes for users and their families.

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

The contribution that the authority's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is good. Since September 2005, inspection findings show that secondary and special schools are effectively developing workplace and other skills that will contribute to young people's future economic well-being. A clear

14-19 strategy involves a wide range of partners. The local authority, schools and the local Learning and Skills Council have collaborated successfully and extended vocational opportunities for 14-16 year olds. A joint sixth form 'quality improvement plan' is intended to unify provision for post-16 students and raise the attainment of those in school sixth forms, which is below the national average.

Multi-agency learning partnerships targeting pupils at risk of not engaging in employment, education or training are having a positive effect. The authority's performance compares favourably with similar areas. The percentage of young people in employment, education or training has risen in the last year and the DfES target for 2006 is likely to be met.

The number of care leavers living in suitable accommodation has risen since last year and is now close to the levels in comparator authorities. The authority's 'leaving care' service has made very good progress in improving the percentage of care leavers in employment, education or training, an area identified for improvement last year. From a low level, the proportion has more than doubled and is now close to the national picture.

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

The leadership and management of services are satisfactory. There is a shared vision for the future of the service and, since summer 2005, the focus has been on developing an effective structure for the new integrated children's services department. There is inconsistency in the strength of management and leadership between services. In education services it is good. Within social care services, which have been subject to major reorganisation, the development of both the infrastructure and the management information systems is incomplete. This is limiting the effectiveness of some important aspects of service delivery and overall the capacity for further improvement is adequate.

There is strong commitment to partnership working and five local strategic partnerships are in place. These present a holistic strategy to provide neighbourhood coherence in service delivery, involving health services, police, social services and extended schools. The CYPP is based on a thorough needs analysis involving the views of young people and has clear timescales for its implementation.

The local authority self-assessment sets out what action has been taken to improve areas identified for development in the last performance assessment. Evidence shows some areas have been tackled, which has resulted in improved delivery of services. Some other areas have not been addressed fully or have yet to deliver adequate or sustained improvement in outcomes. A few areas of service delivery have deteriorated in the last year. Overall, the pace of change in social care services is too slow in delivering the required improvements.

The department is also involved in the process of developing a much more preventative and joined up Family Service. While the new service is moving in the right direction, it has some way to go before it will be able to achieve its full potential.

Services for children with disabilities have been moved from the adult social care services to join the new department. This has set particular challenges of integration for staff, systems, finance and information systems. There is much work still to be done to complete this transition and integration of provision. The development plan is moving the service in the right direction, but significant improvements in service delivery have still to be achieved in order to provide a satisfactory service to users and their families.

The authority has successfully managed the budget during the transition to establishing an integrated department and put in place changes to budgets which address historic imbalances. It has maintained the level of front line services whilst, at the same time, delivering in excess of £2 million in efficiency savings.

The authority has been successful in reducing staff sickness levels in social care and maintaining training budgets. It is less clear why vacancy levels have increased. There has been political commitment to maintaining staff levels in social care. The council is facing difficulties in the recruitment of head teachers, a large number of whom are about to retire; the authority does not have a strategy in place to tackle this issue.

### 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>the health of looked after children</li> <li>the work of schools in promoting the health of children and young people</li> <li>the sustained reductions in the number of pregnancies in teenagers under the age of 18 years.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>delivery by the CAMHS of non-acute mental health services to meet the needs of children and young people</li> <li>health care needs within the plans for children with disabilities using respite care.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the care, guidance and support provided for children and young people by schools, which is reinforced by the social inclusion and education welfare services</li> <li>a reduction in the number of looked after children</li> <li>timeliness of assessments and reviews.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the stability of placements for looked after children</li> <li>the participation of looked after children in their statutory reviews</li> <li>management of the numbers, the gate-keeping and thresholds for children in need</li> <li>the number of children and young people on the child protection register.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• early years provision</li> <li>• school improvement work</li> <li>• the attendance of looked after children</li> <li>• provision in special schools for children with learning difficulties and disabilities.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provision in pupil referral units</li> <li>• the performance of more able pupils.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wide consultation to gain the views of children and young people</li> <li>• the work of the YOT and its effect on reducing the rate of re-offending.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• policies and services to meet better the needs of the black and minority ethnic population</li> <li>• the services and management information systems for children and young people with disabilities</li> <li>• the availability of advocacy services for children with disabilities.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a clear 14-19 strategy involving a wide range of partners</li> <li>• the work of the multi-agency learning partnership targeting pupils at risk</li> <li>• the number of care leavers finding suitable training, education or employment.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students' attainment in school sixth forms.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• budget management</li> <li>• reduction in days lost through staff sickness in social services.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recruitment of headteachers</li> <li>• the inconsistency between management capacity in education and social care services</li> <li>• the grip and pace of change in social care services</li> <li>• implementation of new management information systems.</li> </ul>

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

- How the non-acute mental health needs of children and young people are dealt with by the CAMHS.
- Provision for looked after children.



- Management of the number of children in need and those on the Child Protection Register.
- Provision for children and young people with disabilities and those educated other than at school.
- The extent to which services meet the needs of the black and minority ethnic population.
- The social care services' management and capacity to improve.

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.

Yours sincerely



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