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Ms Jenny Goodall
Director of Community and Children's Services
City of London Corporation
PO Box 270
Guildhall
London
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Dear Ms Goodall

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in the City of London Corporation 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 | 4 |
| Being healthy | 4 |
| Staying safe | 3 |
| Enjoying and achieving | 4 |
| Making a positive contribution | 4 |
| Achieving economic well-being | 4 |
| Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people | 4 |

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate*

Overall effectiveness of children’s services

Grade 4

The City of London Corporation delivers services for children and young people that are well above the minimum requirements for users. The council's capacity to improve, including its management of services is outstanding. The council has continued to build on its outstanding contribution to outcomes identified in the joint area review report, published in December 2007, and which found no significant weaknesses in services. Health outcomes continue to be very strong and good progress has been made in raising standards in education. Children and young people have a wide range of opportunities to participate in decision-making and the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training is exceptionally low. Looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive excellent support. Safeguarding arrangements are good, and the high priority given to early intervention has resulted in a low number of referrals to children's social care services. However, there has been a reduction in the responsiveness of social care services, resulting in high re-referral rates and deterioration in timeliness of initial assessments.

Children and young people's services have excellent capacity to improve further and are very well managed. The council is ambitious for children and young people in the area and has a strong focus on promoting inclusion and tackling disadvantage. Priorities are clear and knowledge about performance is used to drive further improvement.

Being healthy

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 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very good promotion of healthy lifestyles, with clear impact on outcomes. ▪ Highly effective child and adolescent mental health service partnership, enabling good access to services. ▪ Excellent support for looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. |
| Important weaknesses and areas for development |
| |

Staying safe

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 in this outcome area underestimates some weaknesses. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

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| Major strengths |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effective early intervention and prevention, resulting in low numbers of referrals to children's social care services. ▪ Effective pro-active work to reduce bullying and raise awareness of domestic violence issues. ▪ Sustained high performance in supporting looked after children. |
| Important weaknesses and areas for development |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A reduction in the responsiveness of social care services, resulting in high re-referral rates and deterioration in timeliness of initial assessments. ▪ The common assessment framework has not yet been fully implemented. |

Enjoying and achieving

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.

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| Major strengths |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standards are rising with particularly good gains in writing in Key Stage 1 and mathematics in Key Stage 2. ▪ Excellent support for looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All have personal education plans, contribute to regular reviews and their progress is carefully monitored by officers and elected members. They are very well prepared for the next stage in their lives. ▪ An outstanding range of sporting and cultural activities and very good participation rates. |
| Important weaknesses and areas for development |
| |

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.

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|---|
| Major strengths |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Excellent opportunities for young people to influence decision making. ▪ The proportion of looked after children who contribute to their statutory reviews is consistently very high. ▪ High levels of engagement with disadvantaged and vulnerable children and young people which prevent offending and anti-social behaviour and substance misuse. |
| Important weaknesses and areas for development |
| |

Achieving economic well-being

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.

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| Major strengths |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children and young people who are looked after and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported very well. Almost all looked after children over the age of 15 have pathway plans. All have personal advisers and are in suitable accommodation. ▪ Consistently high levels of achievement at Level 2 and Level 3 by age 19. ▪ The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training is exceptionally low. |
| Important weaknesses and areas for development |
| |

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

Grade 4

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is outstanding and its management of these services is also outstanding. The council has been very effective in maintaining high standards in almost all areas of its work and in bringing about further improvement in some. Very good partnerships, collaborative working and strong links with neighbouring boroughs, local businesses and the voluntary sector have resulted in very good support for children and young people. Good use of analysis, the sharing of information and excellent levels of consultation with young people and their communities have enabled the council to be proactive and to provide early intervention and support. The council has a strong commitment to inclusion so that looked after children and vulnerable and disadvantaged young people are listened to and their views fully taken into account.

This high level of engagement enables young people to successfully influence decisions that affect their lives and council decisions and results in very good outcomes. A real commitment to ensuring the economic well-being of young people has resulted in a very high proportion of young people being in education, employment or training.

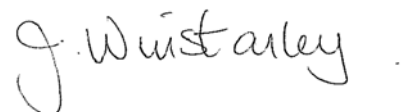
While the council's self-assessment is generally accurate there is insufficient evidence of impact on some outcomes. For example, the impact of case file audits on improving practice is unclear. The council benefits from very good leadership and management at all levels and excellent financial arrangements and use of resources. Performance management is strong. While almost all of the council's actions are effective and timely it has not yet completed the implementation of the common assessment framework.

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|---|
| Major strengths |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Ambitious and effective leadership at all levels.▪ Action planning which is clearly based on an analysis of needs and strong partnerships.▪ Strong commitment to inclusion. |
| Important weaknesses and areas for development |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Some aspects of self-assessment lack rigour. For example, there is insufficient evidence of the impact of some actions. |

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