

26 November 2007

Ms Heather Schroeder
Director of Children, Schools and Families
London Borough of Camden
Crowndale Centre
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Dear Ms Schroeder

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment for your local authority. The judgements in the letter draw on your review of the Children and Young People's Plan where it was available, and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted, other inspectorates and relevant bodies. 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.

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 4

Camden Council consistently delivers services well above minimum requirements for its children and young people. Over the past year, the authority has sustained or improved outcomes for children and young people in each of the five *Every child Matters* aspects. Outcomes for children and young people are good despite the significant social and economic challenges they face. The council is proactive, innovative and ambitious in supporting children and young people to overcome these challenges. The authority works very effectively with its partners and there are many opportunities for children and young people and their families to have an influence on service development. Priorities are clear and are based on detailed analysis of information; performance information is being used very well to drive improvement. The very effective leadership and good financial capacity means that there is excellent capacity to improve further.

Being healthy

Grade 4

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this area is excellent.

There were no areas for improvement identified in last year's annual performance assessment. The authority has a very good understanding of the needs of its communities. Priorities have been based on the needs of the area and there are clear targets. In the past twelve months, the authority has continued to improve its performance in promoting healthy lifestyles and good health for children and young people.

The proportion of mothers breast-feeding has improved by nearly 20% and the performance in this area is very significantly above the national average. This has been due to the multi-agency targeted work. The authority reports that the low levels of childhood immunisation are due to the high publicity given to a local medical practitioner highlighting his views on the risks of the MMR vaccine which has had a negative impact. The authority is taking appropriate action. For example, an action plan has been implemented to ensure that information and advice is available.

The authority is on course to achieve its targets for schools gaining Healthy Schools Status. It is currently extending this programme to its Children's Centres and its performance is better than the regional average in this area. Targeted work on reducing obesity has excellent potential, but it is too early to judge its definitive impact. The authority has obtained good baseline information so that services can be targeted more effectively. Outcomes for physical health are improving and there has been a substantial reduction in infant and perinatal mortality rates. Oral health for children aged five remains an area that needs to be improved. Work has been undertaken to deliver information to provide families with advice regarding oral health.

There is a continued focus on improving sexual health and on reducing teenage pregnancy which has seen a reduction of 19% since 1998. The authority is developing further innovative and targeted approaches to achieve the 2010 target. There is a very high level of provision for the health needs of looked after children which was rated excellent when the fostering service was inspected. Health assessments and dental checks for looked after children are timely and better than the national average.

There is a fully comprehensive and very effective Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) which operates at all four tiers. CAMHS has an excellent level of accessibility with a 100% performance for meeting timescales for commencing assessments of referrals of children who have identified mental health needs. There has been an investment in Tier 2 and Tier 3 CAMHS services which is already proving effective in reducing the number of children becoming in-patients. CAMHS offers a wide range of support and training to partner agencies including support and supervision to staff in secondary and primary schools. CAMHS provides targeted services for vulnerable groups including therapeutic intervention and support to carers to enable children with disabilities to remain with their families.

The authority and its partners have been successful in enabling children who have identified substance misuse needs to receive prompt intervention. There has been a focus on reducing smoking and substance misuse and evidence from surveys

indicates that this has been effective. Camden is commissioning a new Family Drugs and Alcohol Court to ensure effective prevention and intervention for high risk families. The proportion of young people receiving treatment for substance misuse has increased but remains significantly below the regional average. It is encouraging to note that the authority's preventative strategy includes the appointment of a senior practitioner to support children affected by parental substance misuse. The authority has developed a multi-agency integrated service for children with disabilities and their families which is inclusive with a single point of access.

Area for development

- Continue to improve immunisation rates.

Staying safe

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good.

The authority demonstrates strong partnership working and has implemented a clear multi-agency strategy to enable earlier interventions and preventative work. The proportion of children looked after in Camden has remained stable from 2004-05 to 2006-7, although effective preventative services are reducing the number of young people over 13 who become looked after. The authority's good, and in some cases very good, performance with regard to looked after children is a reflection of its strong corporate parenting. The timeliness of reviews for these children is very good with 95% of reviews taking place on time. The stability of long-term placements has remained stable and is broadly in line with similar authorities. The authority's performance with regard to preventing children having three or more placement moves has improved and is significantly better than similar authorities. The most recent information from the authority shows that it is now making significant headway in this area. The fostering service within this area was judged to be good.

Just over 90% of all newly looked after children are placed within 20 miles of their home; this is in line with similar authorities. All children were allocated to a qualified social worker in 2006-07.

The proportion of looked after children who are adopted has dropped significantly this year to 5.3%. The authority has identified the reason as being due to a delay in the court process and has provided information to show significant progress is now being made in this area. Camden has continued its very good performance with regard to care leavers; all have pathway plans and are allocated a personal adviser. Over 90% of young people with disabilities aged 14 and over have pathway plans.

There is an embedded culture of safeguarding within Camden which is evident in the routine work of individual agencies and key partnerships. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has a good level of representation and has taken on its wider role. The authority is proactive in engaging with agencies and the community.

The authority is committed to innovative and preventative ways of working and there are many examples of this. It has a well-established family group conference service, which is effective at prevention. It has undertaken some very commendable work with regard to domestic violence and the council is a trailblazer for work with young runaways and children and young people at risk of sexual abuse.

There are appropriate and agreed thresholds for access to child protection and family support services. The percentage of referrals is above that of similar authorities and has increased significantly this year. This has been due to a lowering of the threshold to enable early intervention through creating greater access to services. The percentage of repeat referrals is very good and lower than similar authorities. The number of core assessments recorded as undertaken has fluctuated considerably year on year, with a large increase from 2005-06, when numbers were very low, to 2006-07, but with local data showing a recent reduction. In view of this, the authority needs to continue to review its thresholds for making core assessments. Timescales for completing core assessments have decreased to 65%. The authority has identified that one of the reasons for this is the introduction of a new system and it has provided information to show that significant progress is now being made.

The proportion of children on the child protection register has reduced this year, though the number of children registered is higher than similar authorities. The higher rate of registration is reflected by the authority's needs analysis. Effective work is undertaken with these children and children are removed from the register appropriately and in a timely way. The re-registration rate on the child protection register remains in the top band of performance. All children on the child protection register are allocated to a social worker and all reviews are held on time.

Area for development

- Improve the timeliness of the completion of core assessments and continue to review the number of core assessments that are undertaken.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good.

Children are getting a good start to their education due to the very effective multi-agency work between services. This is ensuring consistency in advice and assessment. A good example of this is the work between services to address the issue of attendance with parents. The quality of early years provision in Camden is very good. The percentage of children in Camden who showed a good level of development is 46% compared to the Public Service Agreement of 50%. Children are well prepared for accessing the Key Stage 1 curriculum.

Value added between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is very good with the authority being ranked seventh nationally. However, standards at Key Stages 1 and 2 are

below the national average and in need of improvement. It is encouraging to note that provisional 2007 results for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 indicate that strategies adopted by the School Improvement Service, for example, the use of Intensifying Support Programme, have had a very positive impact on attainment. Significant improvements in Key Stage 2 English and mathematics results led to Camden being recognised by the Department for Children, Schools and Families as one of the 15 local authorities in England showing the greatest improvements.

At Key Stage 3 performance is in line with national averages. Results at Level 5 and above in mathematics and science have consistently improved. English results have dropped by 1%. The trend continues to be upward over time. Variation in performance between secondary schools still exists although all secondary schools met the 2006 floor targets. At Key Stage 4 performance has improved. The percentage of students achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, has increased by 5%, with eight out of nine schools achieving an improvement on 2005 with Camden at the national average for this measure. The contextual value added for Camden students overall is above the national averages, showing very good progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. The proportion of students gaining at least one GCSE grade A* to G has improved. The performance of looked after children has increased, although it has fallen significantly for students who achieve one or more A* to G. Further improvements are needed in the results of students from some minority ethnic heritage groups.

The authority continues to work closely with schools, families and the local community to improve attendance. Attendance in primary schools declined in 2006 despite the authority's efforts. Authorised absence, which is high compared to national figures, is of particular concern. In secondary schools attendance is in line with statistical neighbours and national averages. However, unauthorised absences remain high and well above national figures. The attendance of looked after children remains an area for improvement. The percentage of permanent exclusions is below the national figures. Although numbers are small, there is a relatively high incidence of statemented children being permanently excluded from primary schools.

Support for school improvement is very good and intervention strategies continue to be effective in helping schools to raise standards. The outcomes of recent section 5 inspections have been very positive. The authority has no schools in a category of concern.

Areas for development

- Improve attainment for some minority ethnic groups.
- Improve attendance and attainment for looked after children and young people.
- Reduce permanent exclusions for statemented pupils in primary schools.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 4

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is excellent.

The authority has a strong, longstanding culture of both seeking and acting on children and young people's views. As a result, there are extensive mechanisms for consultation with children and young people, both at strategic and operational levels. Strategies have been successfully implemented to regularly engage with vulnerable young people. These include forums for looked after children and children in need, who have provided training for officers and members and play a key role in the appointment of senior officers. For example, a young people's panel recruited the new independent Chair of the Camden Safeguarding Board.

The Tellus2 survey demonstrates that Camden's young people participate and give their views on a wide range of issues. They have a positive view of the degree to which schools listen to their views. The vast majority of schools have school councils and a young person has been elected to the National Youth Parliament. The authority's comprehensive anti-bullying strategy is positively impacting on improved playground behaviour and some parents also report positive impact within the home environment. As part of the Safer Schools Partnership, the police also report a great reduction in the number of incidents reported by young people going to and from school. Children with disabilities have access to advocates via a voluntary sector scheme.

The authority has been successful in ensuring that all young people, including those with learning difficulties, participate in their reviews. A further testament to this is the very high proportion of looked after children who contribute to their reviews. All care leavers have pathway plans.

Camden has made very good progress in establishing support services, for example the very good Safer Schools Partnership. The authority is now moving towards a strategic level delivery plan. Police investment has doubled through resources channelled into the Youth Offending Team and all secondary schools in Camden now have a police officer based in the school or have links with one. Good partnership working is taking place, for example in dealing with transitional issues from primary to secondary schools. Workshops using drama and other interactive activities dealing with the consequences of anti-social behaviour have been provided for young people at every secondary school. Youth workers and Connexions personal advisors act as role models and support young people to remain in education, training or employment.

The work of the Youth Offending Service has been very effective in reducing anti-social behaviour by children and young people. The service continues to outperform similar authorities and national services. The work with families with the most entrenched anti-social behaviour is particularly effective; they have received

intensive parenting training. The levels of re-offending have been reduced, significantly so in pre-court re-offending rates. The proportion of looked after children with final warnings, reprimands and convictions continues to be below the national level. A looked after children's champion has been appointed to ensure a consistent service.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good.

The authority's Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) demonstrates its commitment to improving outcomes further. Through the CYPP the council has set challenging targets and is taking appropriate, and often innovative action, in its efforts to meet them. It is successful in ensuring a wide range of stakeholders are involved in improving outcomes for children and young people. The authority has identified and maximised opportunities for employment and training. A good example of this is King's Cross Working, a project providing information, advice and guidance for young people including work taster sessions. Further examples of initiatives and programmes include employment and training initiatives to enable lone parents to return to work and projects providing women returning to work with advice and guidance. The impact of this strategy has resulted in a high percentage of young people, including looked after children and young offenders who continue in education, employment or training after the age of 16. There has been a notable improvement in the proportion of Black and minority ethnic pupils staying on in full-time education. The proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training has reduced significantly since 2004. The authority has prioritised supporting young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve economic well-being as an area of particular focus.

Child care provision in Camden is informed by a comprehensive audit and needs analysis. It is of good quality and providers are supported to ensure this is maintained. Particularly noteworthy is The Childcare Support Fund, which subsidises child care for lower income families. The authority will deliver 17 children's centres in phase 1 and 2. A strong Family Learning Service encourages parents to share in their children's learning. There are four learning centres based in schools. Strong strategic leadership results in exemplary partnership working across extended services through localisation. There are good local models of performance management.

Camden's 14-19 Strategy Plan 2007-2013 has been recently finalised. Although there has been some delay due to the new head of 14-19 provision being appointed, strong action has now been taken. The 14-19 strategy is led by a robust executive. Membership of this group includes representatives from schools, the Learning and Skills Council, Westminster Kingsway College, Connexions and work-based learning providers. The 14-19 Strategy plan is accompanied by an implementation plan designed to complement the Building School for the Future Wave 5 Strategy for

Change, which includes the development of a broader Camden-wide 14-19 curriculum offer. Its next step is to produce draft area-wide protocols. There are good plans to examine the potential for cross-borough collaboration in provision and submission and start dates for diplomas.

The authority's success in improving outcomes for young people is evident through the proportion of young people achieving Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications by the age of 19, which is above national measures.

Areas for development

- Continue to develop the 14-19 strategy across all institutions in order to provide learners with clear pathways to a wide curriculum, including vocational education.
- Ensure the participation of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in education, employment or training.

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

Grade 4

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council has excellent capacity to improve its services for children and young people, and its management of these services is excellent.

The authority demonstrates strong ambition and has a clear vision for improvement which is shared by partners. There is strong partnership working across agencies and the voluntary sector. The authority has effective joint commissioning arrangements across a range of functions and is developing these further.

There are strong governance arrangements and multi-agency working is fully integrated and embedded in practice at all levels in the system. Systems for performance management are strong and focus on improving outcomes for children and young people.

The current CYPP is based on a comprehensive, updated needs analysis. Delivery of services is clearly based on needs. The updated needs analysis and consultation led to a revised set of priorities. The authority's key priority is to safeguard, and improve achievement of, all children and young people. The authority has demonstrated its ability to deliver on the priorities. There is a culture of participation and children are fully involved in the planning and delivery of services. There is constant focus on innovation to improve practice.

The authority has a strong focus on providing value for money services and efficiency savings through working with partners and joint commissioning. CAMHS is an example of this, where efficiency savings were made through implementing a more integrated and preventative approach. Further efficiencies through workforce

re-modelling are also being delivered. The authority has sound financial planning and budget management.

To improve efficiency the authority has developed joint working with neighbouring boroughs. A consortium to support the fostering and adoption service has been developed to enable efficiencies through joint procurement. The authority is working with neighbouring authorities to commission a local three-bedded unit for children with high level needs in order to increase local placement choice.

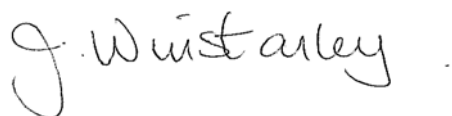
Camden has strong governance arrangements in place, with agreed priorities, and has demonstrated that it has been effective in meeting these priorities. The council is developing further its systems to monitor the impact of services on outcomes for children. It has invested in the recruitment and retention of staff. Effective strategies for recruitment and retention have ensured Camden's vacancy levels remain low for headteachers and teaching staff. However, vacancy levels for social care staff continue to be significantly higher than neighbouring authorities and the national averages. The authority reports a recent competitive pay award for social workers is having a positive impact on staff morale and recruitment. The authority has a clear workforce strategy and progress against training targets is positive.

Area for development

- Continue to improve mechanisms for measuring the impact of services on outcomes for children and young people.

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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection