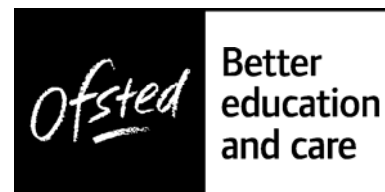


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Making Social Care  
Better for People



MS Heather Schroeder  
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**1 November 2006**

Dear Ms Schroeder

## **2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment (APA) 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 yourself 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	<b>4</b>
The council's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	<b>4</b>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	<b>4</b>

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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

Camden Council provides a service to children and young people that consistently delivers well above the minimum standards for children and young people. There is strong performance across all of the Every Child Matters outcomes. The authority is aware of its strengths and has action plans in place to address areas for improvement.

It has excellent capacity to improve services to children and young people.

## **Being healthy**

The contribution of the authority's children's services to children being healthy is excellent and outcomes in this area are excellent. There are well developed and strong partnership arrangements, which have a positive impact on children's health. Section 5 inspection evidence indicates the majority of schools inspected were graded good or better for healthy lifestyles. Through careful targeting and good collaborative working there has been a significant reduction in the number of teenage pregnancies; an area identified for improvement in last year's APA. The local authority (LA) has made very good progress towards establishing a fully comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) with a high level of input into integrated teams and with good accessibility to schools. The LA recognises the potential threat of budgetary pressures impacting on the continued high level of service delivery, but has realistic plans for efficiency savings. There are flexible and well coordinated services for children with disabilities, shaped by consultation with parents and carers. This has led to a reduction in residential school placements and more family home based respite services and increased uptake of direct payments. There is effective early intervention and treatment for young people misusing substances. High proportions of looked after children have annual health and dental checks. The fostering service was commended for its pro-active role in promoting children's health.

## **Staying safe**

The contribution of the authority's children's services and social care services to ensuring children's safety is excellent. There has been continued and strong improvement across most areas of social care for young people. Outcomes in this area are generally very good. The LA has established a Local Children Safeguarding Board. There are robust systems for auditing the quality of practice particularly at front line service delivery, including auditing of case files and case reviews. This informs future practice, for instance the LA will ensure services are more accessible over Christmas 2006, in response to feedback from a quality audit undertaken of cases dealt with over Christmas 2005.

Child protection has a high profile across the LA, and partner agencies, and there is a high level of child protection activity. There are comparatively large numbers of children placed on the Child Protection Register, which is supported by the authority's needs analysis. Scrutiny of this area of work has led to a deliberate lowering of thresholds, in order to reach more children, particularly children at risk of neglect. Increased resources are being targeted in this area, including placing social workers within schools. The LA performs well on indices of duration on the Child Protection Register and the numbers of children being re-registered is low.

Fewer teenagers aged 13 and over entered the care system following family breakdown, which was an area for development in last year's APA. There is more targeted intervention and preventative work, including more school-based social workers. The LA is implementing a Common Assessment Framework across key agencies and information sharing protocols.

There has been a reduction in the number of initial and core assessments undertaken on time. Although timing of core assessments is still deemed to be good, it is an area for improvement to the authority's previous very good performance. The authority reports this drop to be an issue associated with the introduction of a more robust and comprehensive database. Looked after children are well cared for. Increasing numbers are placed in family settings, including those fostered by relatives and friends, with less reliance on residential care. The stability of placements for looked after children has improved. Generally the LA performs very well regarding the numbers of children looked after who are being adopted, although adoptions for harder to place young people remains an area for improvement. All looked after children and those on the Child Protection Register have an allocated qualified social worker and their reviews are undertaken within timescales. High proportions of children with disabilities have plans in place to assist transition into adulthood. The authority has progressed the issue of safety of children being educated at home, which was raised in last year's APA by developing systems for information gathering and tracking.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

The contribution of the authority's children's services is good and the outcomes in this area are good. Multi agency work between services is having a positive impact on the education of children and young people. A strong Family Learning Service encourages parents to share in their children's learning. There are four learning centres based in schools. Full extended service is offered by one secondary school and two-thirds of secondary schools are open from 8.00am to 6.00pm. Nearly all schools provide access to after-school clubs and over a third provide breakfast clubs.

The overall quality of early years provision is very good and the authority's Children's Centre Strategy has been very effective in improving provision through Sure Start initiatives and early years centres. These centres prepare young children well for the Foundation Stage.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 is in line with statistical neighbours but below the national average. The authority is well aware that improvements in mathematics are needed and this is a relative weakness across all key stages. There are indications that the strategies employed by the LA are having an impact. For example, slight gains in mathematics at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 3 have been made this year. However, further appropriate strategies are planned and being delivered by consultants targeted at developing assessment, with a particular focus on tracking pupil progress and the use of curricular targets.

Attainment at Key Stage 2 is in line with national averages. Value added between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is very good. At Key Stage 3 there have been some improvements; attainment is in line with statistical neighbours for mathematics but above for English and science. It is in line with national averages for English, mathematics and science.

Results fell from the previous year in Key Stage 4. The percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE grades A\* to C is in line with statistical neighbours but below national averages. However, there are improvements in the performance of black and minority ethnic pupils particularly at Key Stages 3 and 4. Particularly noteworthy is the improvement in achievement for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) at Key Stage 3, following work to develop the engagement of parents. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining at least one GCSE grade A\* to G improved. There is good performance of looked after children obtaining educational qualifications, which is 12% above the inner London average.

Value added between Key Stages 2 and 4 and between Key Stages 3 and 4 is below national average, although progress is satisfactory. Variation in performance between secondary schools still exists although all secondary schools met the 2005 floor targets.

The LA systems for the re-engagement of children missing education are good; these have been highlighted as good practice by the London Collaborative Children Missing Education Group. Attendance in primary schools is improving and is in line with that of statistical neighbours, and the rate of unauthorised absence is in line with the national figure. In secondary schools, attendance and unauthorised absence are in line with those of statistical neighbours and the national average. Absence from school for looked after children has increased slightly and remains an area for improvement. The LA reports the slight increase to be a result of closer, more robust monitoring systems. The percentage of permanent exclusions is below national figures.

The authority is liaising closely with its neighbouring authorities on the projected shortfall of school places. Extensions to two secondary schools have already been completed and will meet the immediate demand. Further strategic planning focusing on placements and building schools for the future are underway to ensure that sufficient places will be available when required.

Recent Section 5 inspection outcomes have been very positive. The authority has only one school in a category of concern. Support for school improvement is good and intervention strategies continue to be effective in helping schools to raise standards.

### **Making a positive contribution**

The authority's contribution to enabling children to make positive contributions is excellent and outcomes in this area are excellent.

There is a strong commitment to facilitating the participation and empowerment of young people. There are extensive mechanisms for consultation with children, both at strategic and operational levels. Strategies have been successfully implemented to regularly engage with harder to reach and vulnerable young people. These include forums for looked after children and children in need, who have provided training for LA officers and members and play a key role in the appointment of senior officers of the LA.

A project in the Somali community has trained, and provided, mentors to young people to enhance community participation, training and employment opportunities. The large 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 recount 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. A very high proportion of looked after children contribute to their reviews and all care leavers have pathway plans.

The proportion of young people engaged with the Youth Service is higher compared to the national average. The range of preventative services coordinated through the Growing Up Safely Project are very good; this has resulted in disaffected children and young people receiving targeted support and effective education provision which have led to low levels of exclusion. The work of the Youth Inclusion and Support Panels has been effective in reducing anti-social behaviour by children and young people. Particularly effective is the work with families with the most entrenched anti-social behaviour who have received intensive parenting training. The levels of re-offending have been reduced by 15%. The proportion of looked after children with final warnings, reprimands and convictions fell in the last year and is below the national level.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

Childcare provision in Camden is informed by a comprehensive audit and needs analysis. The authority has nine existing children's centres with a further two centres to be completed at the end of the year. This will substantially increase the provision and provide support for families. The LA 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 tasters.

The services provided by the authority make an excellent contribution to the economic well-being of children and young people, and outcomes are good. The authority has given high priority to the 14–19 strategy. Following changes in personnel, the issues highlighted in the 2005 APA have been addressed and there is a coherent strategic partnership in place. A broader curriculum is now offered, including seven additional Entry Level and Level 1 courses for 14 to 16-year-old learners and five additional Entry Level and Level 1 courses for 16 to 19-year-olds.

A high percentage of young people, including looked after children, young offenders and those with disabilities continue in education, training or employment 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 should maintain the focus on implementing the 14–19 strategy. The authority has continued to improve links with a local college offering further vocational opportunities for pupils aged 14–19.

There has been good progress on ensuring young people live in suitable accommodation. High proportions of care leavers are living in suitable accommodation at age 19, with above the national average performance. Similarly, very high proportions of young offenders are in suitable accommodation. The youth offending team has developed good links with the housing department; shared targets around aspects of Supporting People have assisted this.

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

The authority has established an integrated Children's Service and maintained good or improved performance in most operations while implementing the change. The service is very well managed. Most areas identified in last year's APA have been addressed. Areas for improvement have realistic and targeted plans to address them and are carefully monitored.

The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) sets out the strategic vision of the LA and its partners and is based on an analysis of need. The authority has set up the Children and Young People's Partnership to oversee the implementation of the CYPP at both strategic and operational levels and with reporting arrangements to both the LA and partners, in accordance with governance structures.

There was extensive consultation over the plan, with key stakeholders, including more vulnerable children. Consultation with children and young people is entrenched and extensive, supported by dedicated participation officers and reporting to a sub-group of the Children and Young People's Partnership. Results of consultative processes have impacted on service delivery improvements, for instance the re-commissioning of school meals services and young people's direct input into improvement plans for the Youth and Connexions Service.

Partnership working is strongly embedded in the organisational culture and arrangements are in place for the establishment of further sub-groups of the partnership, with joint commissioning and performance management roles.

The authority has well established and effective performance management systems, although it needs to ensure consistency of the implementation of its new comprehensive database. There is good corporate commitment to children services. The authority has sound financial planning and children's social care services were delivered within budget

last year. Spending for children's social care per head is above the inner London average. The LA also has a good track record of securing additional funding, for instance via Neighbourhood Renewal Funds. There is a commitment to providing value for money services and the Children's Service has created efficiency savings via partnering processes.

There is strong leadership, vision and direction and the authority is committed to continuous improvement of its services for children and a priority is to enhance the participation of young people in decision-making processes.

There is innovative practice, for instance exploring the feasibility of a family drug and alcohol court in working with families who abuse substances. The LA has been acclaimed for some areas of practice, for instance the London Child Protection Committee have commended the work in the arena of domestic violence and with children at threat of sexual exploitation.

Children's social care services have well trained and more stable workforce with low levels of staff sickness. All staff working with children are suitably qualified and there is good investment in further staff training, including sponsoring professional graduate courses. A recent competitive pay award for social workers should continue to impact on vacancy levels, which are improving and positively impacting on staff morale.

There is excellent capacity for improvement to its children's services.

## 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>• partnership arrangements</li> <li>• children's mental health services</li> <li>• reduction in teenage pregnancies</li> <li>• health of looked after children</li> <li>• fostering service</li> <li>• promoting healthy lifestyles.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• none identified.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all looked after children/children on Child Protection Register have social workers</li> <li>• timely reviews of vulnerable children</li> <li>• improved placement stability for looked after children</li> <li>• transition plans for children with disabilities.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• timing of initial and core assessments</li> <li>• improved outcomes/adoptions for harder to place looked after children.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased provision and quality of care in early years</li> <li>• improved attainment at Key Stage 3 and meeting Key Stage 3 floor targets</li> <li>• consultation and involvement of children and young people in decision making</li> <li>• very high value added from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• absence from school of children looked after</li> <li>• attainment in English and mathematics at Key Stage 1 and mathematics across all phases</li> <li>• support for low performing schools, particularly below floor targets at KS2.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• extensive and mainstream consultation</li> <li>• anti-bullying strategy</li> <li>• looked after children contributing to reviews</li> <li>• effective inter-agency work through the work of the youth offending team.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• none identified.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• high priority to the 14–19 strategy with a coherent strategic partnership in place</li> <li>• improved curriculum opportunities</li> <li>• improved staying on rates, particularly for black and minority ethnic pupils</li> <li>• improved vocational pathways for pupils with special educational needs including children with disabilities.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintained focus on the implementation of the 14–19 strategy.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strong leadership</li> <li>• established and effective performance management culture</li> <li>• well qualified workforce.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consistent implementation/application of new database.</li> </ul>

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

### Staying safe

- Timing of initial and core assessments.
- Improved outcomes for harder to place looked after children/adoptions of looked after children within the year for the best interest decision.
- Lowering thresholds for children in need/being neglected and the link to longer term preventative work.



## Enjoying and achieving

- Absence from school of looked after children.
- Attainment in English and mathematics at Key Stage 1 and mathematics across all phases.
- Support for low performing schools, particularly below floor targets at KS2.

## Achieving economic well-being

- Maintained focus on the implementation of 14–19 strategy.

## Management of children's services

- The bedding down of database implementation, particularly regarding consistency of practitioner interpretation and application.

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



**FLO HADLEY**

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**JONATHAN PHILLIPS**

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