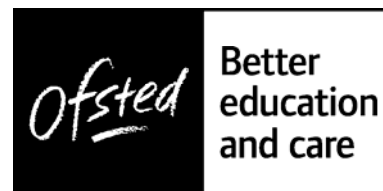


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Making Social Care
Better for People



Mr Gordon Jeyes
Director of Children Services
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1 December 2005

Dear Mr Jeyes

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 4 July 2005 to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your 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.

Being healthy

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. They are beginning to be delivered through strong partnership working and commitment between the education directorate, health, social care and mental health. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have seen a shortage in staffing levels, mainly due to sickness, but there have been significant improvements recently, with increased staffing capacity to deal with children and young people in need of support and the recruitment of a countywide coordinator. Mental health services for looked-after children have also been strengthened by the employment of an additional psychologist.

The referral of non –acute cases from the Youth Offending Scheme to the CAMHS is low and requires improvement. The council is taking this challenge seriously but recent recruitment issues, which have now been resolved, have hampered progress in this area.

The council acknowledges that progress still needs to be made on access to services, for example psychiatric assessments, extension of services to 18 year-olds and addressing the mental health needs of children and young people with learning disabilities.

Although, on the whole, teenage pregnancy trends are on line to meet the national targets of 15 per cent reduction, there remain some areas where the strategy has not yet had sufficient impact, particularly in Fenland. The council is aware of this and will prioritise the strategy to provide a sharper focus in those areas of greatest needs, in particular Huntingdon, North Fenland and parts of Cambridge City.

The percentage of schools involved in the National Healthy Schools Standard programme has increased although this is still currently below average for local authorities within the government office East region. The council has identified a number of activities that have the potential to accelerate growth in the programme across all phases. It is understood that the strategy to recruit schools in cohorts has led to low drop off rates.

Staying safe

Outcomes for this area are satisfactory overall. The council has maintained good stability for looked-after children with the numbers of repeat referrals improving. This suggests that the council is meeting the child's needs at the first point of referral. There have also been other improvements in outcomes for children who are looked after. The numbers of children on the child protection register remains at a low level, with all children placed on the child protection register now allocated a social worker. The council has established its Safeguarding Board, which met for the first time in May 2005. The Safeguarding Board is operating as a partnership board and does not 'belong' to a single agency.

However, there are some aspects that need addressing and the council is confident that these areas will improve before the next annual performance assessment.

Regulation inspections of children's homes and the authority's fostering service have identified several key themes where basic safeguarding issues are a concern. The council has acknowledged the seriousness of these findings and relevant action plans are in place, with 'staying safe' outcomes for children and young people beginning to improve.

Areas for further development in the fostering service include kinship care arrangements and problems identified in providing permanent placements for looked-after children who had been in the system for some time. Low numbers of children generally are being fostered but of those who are, high numbers are being placed out of county. The council has plans to redevelop current services so that more children and young people may be placed within the county and nearer to home.

In children's homes there are concerns about the quality and availability of records for children and staff. In some children's homes the Criminal Records Bureau vetting process must be improved. There is also a lack of child protection training for staff in

relation to physical disabilities, sensory impairment and occupational health services. This relates to social workers from adult services involved in services to children. Invest to Save monies have now been agreed to increase capacity for service delivery particularly for fostering services.

Members and senior officers have acknowledged that the fostering service and children's homes need to be refocused. The council has begun to address some of the issues, in particular the recruitment checks and training for staff in child protection. Issues regarding recruitment practice and CRB checks have been reviewed and fully implemented as a response to the Bichard Enquiry.

However, the council has not improved on all areas identified in last year's performance letter for example, the high number of children in need referrals, coupled with a high percentage of re-registration of children on the child protection register. The completion of initial and core assessments remains a concern. An action plan is now in place and, although some improvements have been made, there is still work to be done.

There have been a number of serious case reviews and the council is aware of the key messages emerging. These issues now have to be translated into action plans to ensure improvement of practice in front line services and that children's well being is safeguarded.

The council has developed a personal safety programme within school settings and child protection training for staff is updated on a regular basis. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has identified equality and diversity practice guidelines as good practice.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are very good. Overall the quality of early year's provision is good. The council has exceeded its target of 85 per cent access to pre-school provision for all 3 year-olds and achieved 99 per cent in 2004/05. The percentage of pupils at Key Stage 1 achieving level 2 and above in reading, writing and mathematics are above national averages and the rate of improvement is also on an upward trajectory.

Standards of achievement at Key Stages 2 and 3 are above national rates and that of statistical neighbours. However, rates of improvement and progress vary across the core subjects. There is good value-added performance as pupils move from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Improvement has been steady for those pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at A* - C. Progress is less strong, however, for those pupils achieving five GCSEs at A*-G, with wide variation in performance between schools with similar characteristics and between subjects. The local education authority is, however, highly

effective in monitoring school improvement, in providing strong challenge and in targeting support to those schools where the need is greatest. Use of performance data to support improvement is also good. Children and young people who are looked after are encouraged to attend school and generally enjoy the experience. A high percentage of looked-after children aged 16 and above achieve at least one GCSE at A* - G or GNVQ equivalent. However those in the care system achieving five GCSEs at A* - C are well below national average.

The Special Education Needs (SEN) strategy has been fully implemented and results already show improvements in attainment levels. Achievement for children and young people with SEN is better than statistical neighbours and nationally and the specialist teaching service has received national recognition. Investment has been made in two new purpose-built specialist schools as a result of a successful bid to the DfES targeted capital fund.

School exclusion rates are very low. The authority has established a 'managed move' policy to ensure that pupils move between schools without requiring out-of-school provision and re-integration. This has been cited as good practice in Ofsted's 'Out of School' publication, December 2004.

Attendance in primary schools, although above national averages and comparing favourably with rates within the East of England, remains within the lower quartile compared with statistical neighbours. The council acknowledges a number of factors for this, not least the high numbers of travellers' families and migrant workers moving in to the county.

The number of asylum seekers is starting to decline but assessment work by the local education authority (LEA) continues at the Oakington assessment centre. To address such issues, the council maintains a strong commitment to social inclusion and gives this area of work high priority. There are effective strategies to ensure these children, in particular, receive their education entitlement and are enrolled at school. The council is also aware of the adverse impact this has had on attendance figures. A small traveller team is in place to support educational attendance and achievement and distance-learning opportunities are being promoted by the LEA within the traveller community.

Underachievement for minority ethnic groups, particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi boys, is a particular concern and work to target improvement in performance is underway. A data performance framework has been established and targets have been set at local authority level, to be fully implemented in the autumn term 2005.

The race equality service is being re-focussed to ensure that any issues are fully integrated and actions to reduce them are embedded across the authority. Clear and effective monitoring arrangements are in place to promote racial equality. The council

also gives priority to identifying provision for the most vulnerable children and young people.

The re-structuring of the children's services has brought together the Youth Offending Service the youth service and Connexions under a senior management umbrella and this is intended to strengthen partnership arrangements, provision and outcomes for children and young people.

The youth service was recently re-inspected in March 2005 having received an unsatisfactory report in 2004. Considerable progress has been made, although some areas require further attention. For example, funding to the service remains low and a number of buildings are in need of improvement; curriculum development, session planning and evaluation and quality assurance procedures are new and not used consistently across the service.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are good. The council has a number of strategies in place to ensure that young people are involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of services, particularly those children and young people who are looked after or have learning difficulties and /or disabilities. The majority of young people with learning difficulties and /or disabilities at the age of 14 have transition plans in place and are involved in their own reviews.

Recidivism rates of young offenders have reduced particularly at pre-court stage and for first tier penalties. However, the numbers of those young people looked- after receiving a final warning and conviction has increased. There has been no significant improvement over the last three years.

Resourcing and funding constraints impact on the capacity of the YOS to achieve and improve service delivery. The council has developed a coherent preventative strategy to enhance the provision available to the YOS; further funding opportunities are currently being explored by the YOS and through the crime and disorder reduction partnership.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are good. The local education authority has implemented its 14-19 strategy in partnership with the local Learning and Skills Council, Connexions and other providers although impact has yet to be felt. Monitoring arrangements are in place and additional funding streams have been identified to enhance provision. The council has undertaken an internal risk based review of the 14-19 strategy in March 2005, which gave the strategy a rating of full assurance in meeting its objectives. There are early signs that levels of motivation for lower-attaining groups, particularly

boys aged 14 and above, have increased. There is an improved vocational curriculum for 14 -16 year olds and all three further education colleges now offer a range of courses through the increased flexibility programme. Take up is good.

Overall performance at AS/A2 is high relative to national averages and authorities of a similar type. Numbers of those young people not in education, employment and training (NEET) continue to reduce and are well below the target for the area. Variations exist across the county with the highest NEET cohort in Fenland. The 14-19 partnership has identified a number of activities to address this issue but it is too early to measure or identify impact.

The percentage of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in education, employment or training at the age of 16 and above is high and rose in March 2005 to 89 per cent. The picture is less positive for those young people leaving care at 19 years where entry rates to employment, education or training require significant improvement.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • partnership working within education directorate, health, social services and mental health is strong • there continues to be a low level of teenage conceptions per 1,000 population • good work is being undertaken in schools to promote healthy lifestyles • national recognition for health promotion work in schools. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the percentage of schools in the national healthy school standard programme to the government office east target • strengthen CAMHS provision • improve the referral rates of non acute cases from the Youth Offending Scheme and CAMHS • reduce the rate of teenage pregnancies in specific pockets of the county, particularly Fenland • ensure that all children and young people receive regular health checks.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the number of children looked after and those registered on the child protection register remains low with all children on the child protection register allocated to a qualified social worker • there is good child protection practices in place in terms of referrals • there are procedures and protocols in 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve those aspects of foster care that are poorly managed specifically relating to Kinship Care arrangements and provision of permanent placements for some looked- after children who have been in the system a long time • improve the aspects identified as weak in the regulatory inspections -

<p>place for auditing decisions about whether or not to inform the police of alleged sexual offences that have been committed, or suspected of being committed, against a child</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Safeguarding Board has been put into place and met for the first time in May 2005 • there continues to be good stability of looked-after children, with a good level of adoption placements being made within 12 months of the child's best interest decision • children from ethnic minorities are receiving services • the percentage of repeat referrals has improved suggesting that the council is meeting the child's needs at the point of first contact • there is a high percentage of disabled children aged 14+ who have a transition plan from Children's to Adult's services. 	<p>lack of records and poor record keeping, poor safeguarding procedures, consistency in CRB checks, poor or no placement plans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raise the number of foster placements; reduce those that are out of county • reduce the high number of referrals of children in need • improve the completion of initial and core assessments within timescale • improve child protection training for staff in Physical Disabilities, Sensory Impairment and Occupational Therapy Services.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good early years' provision; • the quality of education is good overall, particularly achievements at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 • there is a high percentage of young children leaving care aged 16 or over with at least 1 GCSE at grades A*-G or GNVQ • there is effective monitoring and target setting to support school improvement • children looked after are encouraged to attend school • school exclusions rates overall are very low • there is good support and guidance for monitoring ethnic groups – pupils, parents and families. There are good partnership arrangements in place to promote racial equality. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is a variation between similar schools and areas with GCSE results • improve attendance in primary schools • improve the educational underachievement of minority ethnic groups, in particular Bangladeshi and Pakistani, and that of traveller young people • improve the percentage of care leavers with five or more GCSE's at grades A*-C.

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the transition service is providing effective assessment and guidance for the move of children from children’s to adult’s services • recidivism rates show improvement at pre-court stage and also for first tier penalties below the national average • there is a high number of children and young people who have been able to communicate their views • there is a good range of strategies in place to involve young people in the consultation process for shaping and improving services. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce the number of final warnings and convictions of looked-after children • increase user participation resulting from consultation with young people.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is an above average proportion of children in need with a disability receiving a service • Direct Payments for carers of disabled children are being encouraged • there is a good overall reduction in the numbers of young people in NEET and a low number recorded as unknown • there is a high proportion of young people with learning difficulties between 16 – 19 years of age in education, training and employment. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a variation in NEET in local areas such as Fenland. • Numbers of care leavers aged 19 in education, employment and training have fallen below average and requires further investigation.

Service management

Overall, the council has good capacity for further improvement. Strategic leadership and management of services supporting children and young people are good. Senior officers are well informed and display good management and leadership skills. Elected members are also highly supportive, have clear ambition and provide good steer and direction. There is particularly strong leadership and management within education. Activity is well targeted on need, with a good use of data analysis to enhance improvement and strong alignment to local, regional and national strategies and priorities.

The interim children and young people’s plan has clear vision and identified priorities and this work has been completed in partnership with a wide range of providers.

There is good consultation with a wide range of users across all services and partnership arrangements continue to develop and strengthen. Through the Change4children programme, there has been extensive input by children, young people, parents and carers in the design of services.

The council has a robust approach to assessment of need to enable effective targeting for improvement. A comprehensive needs analysis is currently being undertaken to inform the planning process and to take account of partnership priorities prior to joint commissioning arrangements in 2006. Extensive partnership working is growing a 'sustainable estate' in line with the growth in the child population over the next 15 years.

There is good coordination of resources and pooled budgets through the delivery of the children and young people's plan, which identifies key priorities to address areas of weakness as well as support those aspects, which show satisfactory or better performance. Expenditure is generally in line with service requirements. However, the average cost of placing a child in a children's home and foster care remain high. Funding of the YOS is inadequate to meet the preventative needs of young people in the criminal justice system and the youth service remains considerably under funded in its core budget despite recent commitments by the council to invest in capital projects for 2005-06.

The council is currently consulting on a new Heads of Service structure, which identifies a well-constructed strategic plan with vision and values to be fully implemented in April 2006. A new deputy chief executive for children and young people's services has been appointed to undertake the role of director and a lead member for children's services has also been appointed. This has been in response to Every Child Matters and the major re-organisation across the council has reduced senior positions to increase investment in direct service delivery. Retention of the workforce is not deemed by the council to be a significant issue; however it recognises that recruitment is an area for development and a new campaign is about to be launched. Performance management is in place across all services and 94 per cent of staff had received appraisal in 2004/05.

The council management information system has been upgraded but further work is required to provide training and to raise staff's awareness of the system in order to improve its overall effectiveness. Quality assurance processes require improvement to ensure that practice is sufficiently focused on young people's outcomes across all services and specifically within social care.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Healthy lifestyles are promoted for children and young people:

- impact of strategies to reduce teenage pregnancies.

Looked after children's health needs are addressed:

- review outcomes of health needs of looked-after children.

Staying safe

Looked after children live in safe environments and are protected from abuse and exploitation:

- case tracking of looked after children to identify outcomes taking in to account the following areas:
 - fostering services
 - safeguarding checks and procedures in children's homes and fostering services
 - appropriateness of placements.

Agencies collaborate to safeguard children according to the requirements of current government guidance:

- initial and core assessments.

Enjoying and achieving

Action is taken to ensure that educational provision 5-16 is of good quality:

- achievement of black and minority ethnic pupils.

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy and achieve:

- attainment of looked-after children at GCSE A* to C.

All children and young people can access a range of recreational activities' including play and voluntary learning provision:

- improvements in youth service performance and funding.

Making a positive contribution

Action is taken to prevent offending and reduce re-offending by children and young people:

- funding of YOS in relation to preventative work with young offenders.

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to make a positive contribution:

- reduction in youth offending of looked-after children.

Achieving economic well-being

Action is taken to ensure 14-19 education and training is planned and delivered in a coordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16-19) is of good quality:

- progress on 14-19 strategy
- care leavers entering EET.

Final judgements

Please see your final annual performance assessment judgements attached at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY
Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS
Director – Quality, Performance and Methods
Commission for Social Care Inspection

APA final judgements 2005: Cambridgeshire County Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	2
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	4
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	3

1

Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Very good
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good/promising
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate