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17 December 2008

Mr Paul Brennan  
Acting Group Director of Children and Young People's Services  
Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council  
Town Hall  
Crossley Street  
Halifax  
HX1 1UJ

Dear Mr Brennan

## **Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council 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.

<b>Assessment judgement area</b>	<b>APA grade</b>
Overall effectiveness of children's services	2
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	2
Enjoying and achieving	2
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	2

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

## Overall effectiveness of children’s services

Grade 2

Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council delivers services for children and young people that meet minimum requirements. The council’s capacity to improve, including its management of services, is adequate. The council demonstrates strong ambition for improving the life chances of children and young people and has successfully established partnerships and joint commissioning arrangements that have begun to improve outcomes, especially in relation to being healthy, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being. There is a well developed programme which is starting to have a positive impact on involving children and young people in the review and development of services. For example, young people made important contributions to strategic planning and have taken part in the appointment of senior staff. Results at the end of Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 exceeded national and similar council averages. Significantly students in secondary schools make below average progress and achieve only average GCSE results overall. Most areas for improvement identified in the previous APA have been tackled effectively, although the timeliness in completion of initial and core assessments of children in need declined significantly this year.

## Being healthy

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 a number of important weaknesses and overvalues the areas where progress has been made. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Good partnership working is evident in clearly targeted and costed plans to reduce health inequalities. A very thorough screening programme provides a good basis for tackling childhood obesity which is amongst the lowest in the region.</li> <li>▪ There has been a good reduction in the proportion of women smoking during pregnancy, especially in parts of Calderdale where smoking is prevalent.</li> <li>▪ The regular checking of dental and general health of looked after children remains very good at 85% compared to 82% in similar councils.</li> <li>▪ The child and adolescent mental health service is multi-agency, easily accessible and offers a range of support to partner agencies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The rate for chlamydia screening, at 1.5%, is very low and well below the national target of 15%. The council has planned effectively with the primary care trust and measures are in place to improve screening rates.</li> </ul>

## Staying safe

Grade 2

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. Despite a number of good features, there was a decline in performance in assessing children in need, identified as an area for improvement in the 2007 APA. The council acknowledged this deterioration in performance but this was not reflected in the council's self assessment grade. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Good systems have been established to improve safeguarding with independent reviewing officers reporting directly to the independently chaired Local Safeguarding Children Board.</li> <li>▪ There has been a good year on year increase in the percentage of care plans for looked after children reviewed on time with the current proportion being 98%.</li> <li>▪ Services for looked after children, including fostering and children's homes, were judged to be good when inspected in 2007.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proportion of initial assessments completed within the required timescales has continued to decline and remains below the average for similar council areas.</li> <li>▪ There has been a decline in the number of core assessments completed within timescales from 65% to 50%. This compares unfavourably with the average of 77% for similar councils.</li> <li>▪ Thresholds for referrals to children's services are effectively implemented. The numbers of referrals and repeat referrals have increased significantly and are higher than those in similar councils. The proportion leading to initial assessments has declined from a low level of 17.8% compared to 52.9% in similar councils.</li> </ul>

## Enjoying and achieving

Grade 2

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. The council judged this area to be outstanding. The council made this assessment in June 2008 and based the judgement on the expected improvements in results for secondary schools in 2008. However, for the purpose of this APA, the 2007 results are the evidence for this assessment. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ In primary schools, children made better than average progress and achieved higher than average standards at the end of Key Stage 2. Improvements in English and science were noteworthy.</li> </ul>
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- Rates of school attendance are above the national average. Rates improved by 0.68% in primary schools and 0.43% in secondary schools during the last year. This was a greater improvement than achieved nationally and by similar councils.
- The proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A\* to C at GCSE has increased and remains above the average for similar councils. The same is true for the proportion of those where high passes at GCSE include English and mathematics.
- In 2007, a higher than average percentage of looked after children gained at least one GCSE grade A\* to G.

**Important weaknesses and areas for development**

- In 2007, the contextual value added score for Key Stages 2 to 4 was 989.6. This is lower than that achieved in 2006 (991.3) and is very low compared with secondary schools in other council areas.
- In 2007, permanent exclusions from secondary schools, at 0.3% of students, remained higher than national and similar council averages.
- At Key Stage 1, there has been a year on year decline in results in reading and writing. This trend is below national and similar council averages.

**Making a positive contribution**

**Grade 3**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council judged this area to be outstanding. The engagement of young people in strategic planning is an outstanding feature.

**Major strengths**

- There are well established ways for looked after children, disabled young people, and their parents and carers, and other young people to make their views known. The views of the Youth Council are used effectively to inform the council's strategic plans.
- There has been a good reduction in the number of first time offenders from 515 in 2006 -07 to 433 in 2007-08.
- In 2007-08, a higher proportion of juvenile offenders are in full time education than found nationally and in similar council areas. This was an improvement on 2006-07.
- The Arrest Referral Scheme has successfully uncovered 45 cases of child sexual exploitation and provided subsequent support and intervention for girls and their families.

**Important weaknesses and areas for development**

- Although a higher than average proportion of 13- to 19-year-olds participate in youth service activities the overall participation in out of school activities is only average with fewer participating in arts and cultural activities.

## Achieving economic well-being

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 for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Good progress has been made in reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training from 10.8% in 2007 to 8.9% in 2008.</li> <li>▪ This is reinforced by the significant reduction in the percentage of 16- to 18-year-olds whose occupation is 'not known'. This has fallen from 9.7% to 5.7%. The council's figure is now better than similar areas.</li> <li>▪ The 14 to 19 collaboration between schools and Calderdale College is effective and good progress has been made in developing diplomas and young apprenticeships.</li> <li>▪ The inspection of Calderdale College in 2007 found good provision for 14- to 16-year-old school students, resulting in a high proportion going on to further education.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proportion of young people in care at age 19 living in suitable accommodation fell for the fourth year running, from 81.8% in 2006-07 to 68.4% in 2007-08. This is well below the average for similar councils and the national average.</li> <li>▪ In 2007, in schools with sixth forms, the average point score per subject at A level was 191.87, which was below national and similar council averages.</li> </ul>

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

Grade 2

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is adequate. The director of children's services and her senior team provide positive and energetic leadership. Children and young people are actively involved in the development of services. For example, the Youth Council contributed to setting a new council priority to make transport more accessible and create more safe places where young people can meet. The children and young people's plan sets out well focused activities across the five outcome areas which clearly demonstrate the role of council services and partner agencies. The children and young people's plan also demonstrates a good understanding of the locality and its services strengths and areas for development and has set challenging targets for improving outcomes. However, the council's self-assessment does not analyse weaknesses in performance with sufficient rigour. For example, the council assessed its contribution to staying safe as good when some important outcomes have deteriorated this year and the below average progress made by pupils in secondary schools has not been given sufficient weighting in its own evaluation. Despite this, the council has made strong

progress in ensuring pupils perform well in primary schools and in ensuring more students stay in education, employment or training beyond the age of 16.

<b>Major strengths</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The council has effective strategic leadership supported by strong partnerships and commissioning arrangements.</li><li>▪ Achievement and standards in primary schools are consistently above average.</li><li>▪ Good progress has been made in reducing the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training.</li></ul>
<b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Some social care performance indicators have deteriorated this year.</li><li>▪ The progress made by pupils in secondary schools was below average</li></ul>

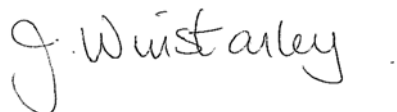





The children's services grade is the performance rating for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will also provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment to be published by the Audit Commission.

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  
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