

26 November 2007

Ms Heather Tomlinson
Director of Children and Young People's Services
Bristol City Council
PO Box 57
The Council House
College Green
Bristol BS99 7EB

Dear Ms Tomlinson

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment (APA) for your local authority. The judgements in the letter draw on your review of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 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 2

The overall effectiveness of children's services delivered by Bristol City Council is adequate and improving. Under strengthened corporate leadership, reorganisation of children and young people's services into three local areas is encouraging more integrated planning and provision, supported by a network of strategic partnerships. The CYPP is clear, based on analysis of local needs. Improving results in a range of national tests indicate satisfactory progress in tackling poor leadership in schools, low expectations, inconsistent behaviour management and the variable standards of teaching that have led to ineffective learning. The gap is slowly narrowing between outcomes for vulnerable children and young people and those for their contemporaries, but improved rates of attendance, and levels of attainment, are needed to bring them into line with national standards.

Being healthy

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. Well targeted initiatives are having a positive outcome. These include parenting support classes, nursing support and speech and language services in all education centres, 24-hour Children and Adolescent Mental Health

Services (CAMHS) with improved CAMHS support for all 16–17 year olds and sexual health service in all secondary schools. The Primary Care Trust (PCT) was judged good by the Healthcare Commission for CAMHS services in 2006–07. The city's Sure Start policy on inclusion, with collaboration between health and education, and the City's Beacon status for Healthy Schools are strengths. Feedback from the Tellus2 survey, involving Year 6 pupils only, indicates that the percentage of children who feel they are healthy is in line with the national average. The council sees improved services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as a key priority; good multi-agency work is being done in areas of hearing and vision and to support children with autism.

Reduction in the number of teenage pregnancies remains a priority. Despite action by Bristol's restructured Teenage Pregnancy Board, rates are above the national average. The proportion of looked after children and young people responding to opportunities for guidance and support to tackle substance misuse is increasing. The impact of teams such as looked after nurses and of a new drugs team is not yet quantifiable. Tier 3 services for substance misusers have been strengthened and there is good progress in tackling alcohol and substance misuse, with early intervention in schools. Rates of substance misuse are still high, however, and treatment rates are not keeping up with need. While 90% of looked after children and young people have dental checks, the proportion having medical checks (79%) is still too low.

Areas for development

- Further reduce rates of teenage pregnancy.
- Ensure that a greater proportion of looked after children and young people respond to opportunities for medical checks and early intervention.
- Strengthen support for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Staying safe

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

Action to ensure the safety of children and young people is adequate. Two thirds of children who completed the Tellus2 survey believe their schools deal well with bullying. The schools themselves consider local services effective in reducing crime against children and young people, other than domestic violence. There is a Bristol-wide Domestic Violence Strategy, and the police coordinated system for screening domestic violence referrals has been in place since April 2007. Nonetheless, levels of domestic violence continue to be a concern. Inspection reports and surveys indicate that schools have robust safeguarding procedures. The Bristol Safeguarding Children Board is well established, with membership from a range of voluntary and statutory agencies. Performance is scrutinised and reports on Serious Case Reviews are overseen and appropriately challenged. Bristol has responded positively to racial

issues. A voluntary organisation works with children involved in racist incidents and also undertakes awareness raising work in schools. Whilst the number of incidents has increased, the satisfaction levels of those involved and their parents have also increased and Bristol has won Beacon status in this area.

The number of looked after children and young people in Bristol is high compared to similar councils. The authority has put in additional resources to support families in crisis and feedback indicates some positive outcomes. Recent data show placement stability for Bristol's looked after children to be good. The number of children referred to social work teams continues to rise, although a lower percentage than the national average progresses to an initial assessment or a full core assessment. Whilst the authority has suggested reasons for this discrepancy, there has been no systematic analysis. The percentage of initial assessments carried out within seven working days of referral is in line with comparable areas and higher than the national average. The proportion of core assessments completed within 35 working days of commencement is significantly better than elsewhere. Every child who is the subject of a protection plan in Bristol has been allocated a qualified social worker, a level of service not matched nationally, and almost all young people aged 14 or over with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have appropriate transition plans. Where a child or young person also has communication problems, trained professionals are involved without delay.

Areas for development

- Strengthen services to minimise domestic violence and emotional abuse.
- Reduce the number of looked after children and young people.
- Analyse the discrepancy between the number of children and young people who are referred to the social work teams and the lower than national percentage progressing to an initial assessment or a full core assessment.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

There has been satisfactory progress since the joint area review (JAR), with clearly defined roles and lines of accountability, rigorous performance management and proactive partnerships between schools, colleges and with outside agencies. The council has invested substantially in initiatives to raise standards, including the use of lead teachers, and of National Strategies and local authority advisers to drive innovation and disseminate good practice, leadership training, more effective partnerships, a rapidly developing academies programme and major upgrading of existing school buildings. There is tighter monitoring of the *Every child matters* outcomes, with feedback from children and young people, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, contributing to planning and improvement. Involving school improvement partners in all secondary schools has been effective

and the Accelerating Progress Programme is enhancing teaching and learning by drawing on strengths in one school to develop weaker aspects in another. There are currently no secondary schools categorised by Ofsted as needing special measures. The number of primary schools in this Ofsted category is higher than in comparable areas but one school has recently come out of special measures and monitoring letters show good progress in the others. Strengthening school leadership has been a priority for the authority and improved performance in national tests indicates that this is working.

There is an upward trend in attainment; most children and young people are making at least satisfactory progress. Bristol's Foundation Stage provision and outcomes are in line with the national profile. In Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, the rate of improvement is higher than for statistical neighbours and nationally with particularly good progress by some minority ethnic groups. Overall levels of attainment, however, are still too low. Improved GCSE results over two years indicate more effective teaching and learning. In 2006 there was a marked increase in the percentage achieving five or more A*–C GCSE grades and an upward trend in the percentage achieving five or more A*–C grades including English and mathematics. The percentage gaining at least one A*–G rose from 92.4% to 95.3%. Survey responses and improving attendance rates indicate satisfactory or better levels of enjoyment. This does not, however, diminish the challenge for Bristol to ensure that attainment matches national averages.

The gap between looked after children and others is slowly closing. The percentage has risen steadily over three years of looked after children in Year 11 who sat at least one GCSE examination or equivalent and an increased percentage achieved Level 4 or above in Key Stage 2 science and in English (above target). Attendance rates for looked after children and young people are poor and this contributes to low attainment. Collaboration with Bristol University is having a positive impact; thirteen young people who were looked after are now following degree courses there. A new Special Education Needs strategy is being implemented after wide consultation. Work done with another local authority has resulted in the 'Below Age-related Expectations Programme' being cited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority as a model of good practice. Links between schools and Bristol City College and the vocational centre on the new Hartcliffe campus are positively extending opportunities for the young people to enjoy and achieve, including those with special and educational needs, learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Youth Service workers in schools are successfully targeting young people at risk of exclusion and fixed-term exclusion rates are falling. The authority has won Beacon status for preventing and tackling anti-social behaviour.

Areas for development

- Raise levels of attainment.
- Reduce the number of primary schools in special measures.

- Improve attendance rates amongst looked after children and young people.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The JAR judged the council's performance in this area to be good and progress has continued to be good. There has been an encouraging take-up of sports programmes and leadership training, both in and out of school, and increased participation in activities such as the Youth Parliament. The great majority of schools now have a school council and a significant number of opportunities have been set up for participation outside formal learning. Looked after children and young people have free admission to recreational facilities and funding for activities. There is effective outreach to teenagers, including those educated outside of Bristol, through conferences and consultation, and opportunities to participate in key decisions such as recruitment of Connexions personnel. Development of extended school partnerships is in line with progress nationally. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given particular help to participate, for example there is good service for those who are deaf. The council acknowledges that a hard-to-reach core of children and young people remains. Youth workers are building more effective relationships with this group, for example through informal contacts in residential units. Indicators such as the increased percentage of young offenders now in education, employment or training are encouraging.

Multi-agency initiatives such as the Young Carers Policy Steering Group, which has a contact person in every school, successfully prioritise vulnerable children. For example learning mentors, mentoring by business volunteers, consultation about the *Every child matters* outcomes and the employment of a specialist support worker are making a worthwhile difference to children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Almost all looked after children are now involved in their statutory reviews. Advocacy systems are well embedded, as are mechanisms for consultation. Connexions is providing strong support and guidance to young people. A partnership approach to anti-social behaviour has resulted in 80% of referrals being dealt with in an informal way, with Anti-Social Behaviour Orders being used as a last resort. Safer Schools Police Officers support restorative justice techniques in schools, which encourage young people to resolve problems. The youth offending team is doing good preventative work and offering a strong range of opportunities for children and young people to address their offending, including access to mental health services through specialist workers. In common with national trends, the number of first-time entrants into the formal justice system has increased. However, re-offending rates by looked after children and young people in Bristol are decreasing. Youth work in schools helps young people on projects to improve achievement and remain engaged. The ratio of youth workers to young people aged 13–19 is higher than the national average.

Areas for development

- Reduce the number of first-time entrants into the formal justice system.
- Increase positive participation in the community by looked after children and young people.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council's provision is adequate and improving. There has been a significant expansion of vocational and work-related opportunities, both within the city and in partnership with external agencies. Substantial investment in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has improved communication about courses for all learners. Accredited courses are available online and there is instant feedback to students and families. Steps have been taken to overcome practical barriers to inter-school and school college collaboration, such as harmonising of timetabling arrangements. A few schools have yet to participate and the process of harmonisation needs to be extended to support further collaboration. There is effective engagement by businesses as providers of work-related learning, as mentors and as members of school and college governing bodies. Investment in the three City Learning Centres has been well linked to specific strategies such as developing teachers' ICT skills and increasing pathways to accreditation.

Following its unsuccessful Gateway bid, the local authority has focused on alternative provision, for example extending the range of BTEC courses offered. Inter-agency projects are contributing usefully to neighbourhood renewal. Achievement rates at sixth form colleges and GFE/tertiary colleges have improved over three years and the 2006 success rate for all work-based learners was higher than the national figure. The percentage of young people achieving Level 3 by age 19 is in line with the national figure. There is now careful tracking of progression into higher education and training, with investigation at local ward level into the causes of low aspiration. Participation in the Quality Assurance Framework for the West of England, involving providers of work-based learning, is developing consistency and good practice. The apprenticeship programme is expanding. The impact of these initiatives can be seen in the growing proportion of 16–18 year olds now in education, employment or training. The proportion of 19 year olds not in education, employment or training, however, is higher than in comparable areas and nationally. The average length of stay for young people in bed and breakfast accommodation in Bristol is in line with statistical neighbours but time spent in hostels is longer.

Areas for development

- Reduce the number of 19 year olds not in education, employment or training and raise the percentage achieving Level 2 and Level 3 by age 19.
- Ensure that housing for young people meets local needs.

- Complete a curriculum mapping exercise to identify any gaps in provision.

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

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The scale of underachievement in the past presents a continuing challenge but the council is building satisfactory capacity through its new inter-agency management structure and a range of initiatives: collaboration between schools, deployment of lead teachers, leadership and governor development, and partnership working. School improvement now has settled and strategic management is coherent. The CYPP presents a clear and ambitious programme with priorities and targets based on needs analysis. Monitoring procedures and success criteria are well defined. Leadership training and well supported performance management at all levels are having a positive impact in raising expectations and sharpening skills. All key posts are now filled. Continued funding is not secure, however, for the Partnership Co-ordinator and Flexible Learning Co-ordinator posts, both of which have strengthened the authority's 14–19 capacity.

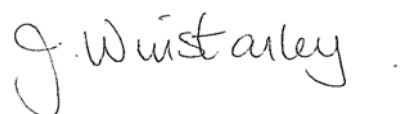
The Government Office 2007 APA briefing noted that commissioning is a major challenge for the Children and Young People's Board and the Primary Care Trust, although reasonable progress is being made in aligning budgets. Expenditure on family support services is satisfactory, just below the figure for statistical neighbours and the national average. Expenditure on children in need but not looked after is good, indicating serious commitment to prevention and early intervention. Action is being taken to manage the provision of school places efficiently, with close support from the Department for Children, Schools and Families, including the combining of schools and the reorganisation of provision as part of the academies programme. Difficult decisions have been taken, such as closing out-of-date facilities. City regeneration is progressing well. The council's support for extended school provision is judged effective by primary and secondary schools.

Areas for development

- Strengthen procedures and controls for commissioning.
- Continue to work closely in partnership with the Academies Unit so that provision of places is managed in a cost-effective way.
- Secure continued funding for strategic posts related to 14–19 provision.

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 "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a trailing dot at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection