



Making Social Care  
Better for People



Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Ms Heather Tomlinson  
Director of Children and Young People's Services  
Bristol City Council  
The Council House  
College Green  
Bristol  
BS1 5TR

**1 November 2006**

Dear Ms Tomlinson

**2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment (APA) process for your local authority. The judgements reflect the outcomes of the joint area review, the updated self-assessment provided by the council and new performance data. We are grateful for the information that you provided to support this process and for the time that you and your colleagues have given to discussing relevant issues.

**Summary**

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

<sup>1</sup>

Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
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

Bristol City Council does not deliver minimum requirements for children and young people. The joint area review (JAR) report identifies that most outcomes are adequate but the levels at which young people achieve in Bristol schools are inadequate. In addition, the nature of some of the identified social care issues and weaknesses in performance management led to the judgement that the council's current capacity to improve on its own is inadequate. However, the council, and its partners, together have an adequate capacity to improve. The JAR identified 'green shoots' of improvement as a consequence of the commitment shown by the council and its partners. The APA process confirms their growth. However, this has not yet altered outcomes sufficiently for children and young people to change the judgements of the JAR.

## **Being healthy**

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is adequate. One recommendation for action in the longer term emerged from the JAR:

- improve the quality of healthcare for children and young people, by:
  - ensuring greater equity of health service provision so that children and young people who need services can readily access them wherever they live
  - addressing the significant gaps in mental health provision and improving arrangements for children with chronic conditions when they make the transition into adult care.

The council, and its health partners, are ensuring greater equity of health provision by a number of actions, including conducting health equality audits for breast-feeding and smoking. The data from these will be used to evaluate outcomes for children and focus resources on areas of need. Future actions will include ensuring a core health offer in Children's Centres and monitoring its effectiveness.

Plans are in place to develop the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), reduce waiting lists and respond to the recommendations in the JAR. The full-time CAMHS worker is prioritising the implementation of a system to monitor outcomes.

Progress has been made in reducing teenage conception rates but this is still below government targets. Youth Offending Team (YOT) information shows timely access to CAMHS and to substance misusers' services, with a low but increasing use of services designed for children. New drugs support and education services have been introduced for young people.

There has been a good increase in the number of looked after children receiving timely health and dental checks.

## Staying safe

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is adequate. The JAR highlighted actions to be taken immediately and over the next six months as follows:

Immediate:

- ensure that the review of safeguarding compliance against the recommendations of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry is updated.

Next six months:

- ensure, in partnership with the Domestic Abuse Forum, that:
  - measures to reduce the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people are given due prominence in future strategy development
  - particular focus is given to multi-agency training and development on emotional abuse and neglect
  - steps are taken to improve the equity of response to the cases where emotional abuse and neglect are suspected.

The updating of the Victoria Climbié audit is complete and an action plan has been developed.

The council has already taken steps to start addressing the other issues. In partnership with the Domestic Abuse Forum immediate action was taken to ensure consistent prioritisation of the response between the police and duty teams. This is being built on by exchange arrangements between duty teams. Safer Bristol has been commissioned to improve procedures for achieving a common threshold and response to domestic abuse referrals. A recent audit has identified a number of areas for improved practice; these have been clarified with team managers and will be followed up, in due course, by a further audit to consider whether practice has improved. These audits will lead to a final action plan as a response to the JAR recommendations about emotional abuse and neglect. The authority is also agreeing a new workload management system to reduce the disparity of workloads across districts. It is too early to assess the impact of these actions.

New data confirm that overall the Child Protection Register is maintained well and although there has been a rise in numbers of children on the register this year, re-registrations, duration on the register and de-registration remain areas with good performance. The proportion of Black and minority ethnic children on the register has increased significantly. The council has promptly responded to this by instigating a review of practice and policy impact assessments. The percentage of children on the register receiving timely review reduced from 100% to 98% this year.

The council has had some success in reducing the number of looked after children but this remains a priority, with new stretching targets made for this year and a continuation of the commissioning project. Looked after children are mainly in family placements and, this year, has shown a good increase in the number of kinship placements. The number of adoptions has fallen substantially and Bristol is below comparator councils. The funding of this service is comparatively low and the last adoption report contained a large number of requirements, although an action plan to address these has been implemented. The reviews of looked after children are not conducted in a timely manner and the target set will not bring performance to a good level. Stability of placements remains good.

### **Enjoying and achieving**

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is inadequate. The JAR highlighted actions for the longer term as follows:

- raise standards of attainment of children and young people as measured, for example, by the proportion of young people achieving qualifications equivalent to five good GCSE passes at age 16 and by age 19, by:
  - improving the rates of attendance and progress made by pupils in both primary and secondary schools
  - developing more rigorous quality assurance processes to ensure that all teaching and learning up to the age of 19 is of a high standard
  - reducing the number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions
  - securing improvement in the performance of underachieving groups, including looked after and Black and other minority ethnic children
  - ensuring statements of educational need are issued within the recommended timescales
  - taking action to raise the aspirations of all children, young people, parents and carers and ensure they are well informed about the education, training and employment opportunities available
  - improving support for young carers.
- improve the recreational facilities for children and young people in some of the more disadvantaged areas of the city.

The council's own data suggest good progress in improving attendance in secondary schools, although it remains below the national average. There has been no improvement in attendance rates in primary schools. The action plan sets out appropriate actions to improve attendance and the authority has kept to the timescales for implementation. Provisional results for 2006 show some improvement in educational attainment but standards remain low overall.

The council has developed more robust procedures for quality assurance across all its schools and has recently agreed procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of provision for students above the age of 16. The timescales for implementation in the action plan are appropriate. Ofsted monitoring reports for schools in categories of concern judged the authority's support to be at least satisfactory and often good. Although there has been a reduction in the number of secondary schools in categories of concern, the number of primary schools has risen.

Data provided by the council show that although the number of permanent exclusions continues to decline, the number of fixed-term exclusions has continued to rise. The action plan outlines appropriate actions to address this problem, but as yet these have had insufficient impact.

Although there has been some improvement in the achievement of looked after children and children from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds, standards remain below average for these groups. The action plan shows that the authority is addressing this with appropriate strategies.

The council acknowledges that an insufficient proportion of statements of educational need are issued within the recommended timescales. It is in the process of restructuring the special educational needs team and is taking action to improve performance in this area, although there is as yet no evidence of secure improvement.

The council has made satisfactory progress in involving young people in the design and delivery of services and the action plan describes appropriate strategies to raise aspirations and to inform them about training, education and employment opportunities. However, this is a long term strategy and it is too soon to judge its impact.

The council has well conceived plans for improving support for young carers. A multi-agency young carers' forum has been set up and joint commissioning arrangements are being established.

Appropriate actions to address the range and quality of recreational facilities for children and young people are in the action plan but are not yet due to be implemented.

### **Making a positive contribution**

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is good. The JAR made no recommendations in relation to this outcome. The authority continues to develop ways in which to involve young people in the planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of its services and to seek their views on a range of issues. Since the JAR there has been a significant increase in first time offending rates, although re-offending rates have reduced. There has also been an increase in the numbers of looked after children given a final warning, reprimand or conviction. A lower proportion of looked after children have participated in their review and the target for involvement is not sufficiently challenging. There has been a good increase in advocacy hours, providing support for looked after children and children in need.

## Achieving economic well-being

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is adequate. The JAR highlighted two actions to be taken in the longer term:

- improve the access to work-related learning for 14 to 19 year olds through improved collaboration with employers and training providers
- improve housing provision and support services for young people with complex needs and reduce the proportion of families with children living in unsuitable homes.

The council has sound plans for improving access to work related learning. Links with employers are adequate. It has sound plans to establish education and business partnerships across the city, but these have not yet been fully implemented. The council is continuing its ambitious restructuring of secondary education across the city, involving the rebuilding of schools and plans to open a Skills Academy in the south of the city.

The plans for improving housing provision and supporting families with children in unsuitable homes are for long-term implementation and it is not possible to comment on their progress.

## Service management

The management of services for children and young people remains adequate overall. The joint area review highlighted one recommendation for immediate attention and two for action in the next six months:

Immediate:

- increase the capacity for improving children's services, in particular education, by consolidating and developing strategic partnerships with outside bodies and agencies.

The council plans to have a joint commissioning unit in place by April 2007.

Next six months:

- improve the understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of the council and its partners in improving children's services.
- improve the quality of performance management by:
  - strengthening the council's scrutiny function for children services
  - increasing the use made of data to evaluate the effectiveness of health services and to inform health service development and health promotion work.

- ensuring that the management information systems of all partners are compatible and that a formalised system for passing and sharing operational information is developed
- improving the monitoring and evaluation of services and projects, focussing specifically on outcomes for children and young people and value for money
- improving human resources support and workforce planning.

The council has made good progress in consolidating and developing strategic partnership with outside bodies and agencies in education. It is collaborating with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to revitalise the primary curriculum and plans to extend this work into Key Stage 3. It is also working with London Challenge to develop the capacity for consultant leadership and as a result of this work has recently seconded a headteacher to set up a local model for secondary headteachers. The council is now developing this programme with London Challenge to include primary headteachers and has seconded a primary headteacher to take this work forward. It is also working with external agencies to pilot Trust school arrangements and expand the Academy programme.

Proposals for consideration by the Scrutiny Commission and Cabinet have been prepared to respond to the JAR's recommendations regarding permanent interagency arrangements and agreements. These are intended to strengthen the delivery role of the partnership and enable interagency decision making. Responsibility for the delivery of the children's and young people's plan will be with the Delivery Group, which will be composed of a strengthened executive board and a council management group. It is also intended to reduce and rationalise the number of subgroups and involve children and young people more effectively. Good progress has been made with appointments.

The council is aligning the annual cycle of scrutiny meetings with the work of the council and has plans to improve the quality of data provided for this function.

Steps have been taken to use data more effectively. Health equality audits for breast-feeding and smoking are in process and early analysis shows a link to areas of deprivation. This is informing the breast-feeding strategy, which is currently being consulted upon.

There are long-term plans to make sure information systems are compatible which are not yet due to be implemented. An external partner has been commissioned to review existing arrangements and to design and deliver revised procedures.

The council is improving the monitoring and evaluation of services and projects through development of a single framework for monitoring performance against key indicators, a clear matrix of responsibilities and the development of performance scorecards.

Human resources have been reorganised and new posts have been created to provide increased capacity. There is evidence of good recruitment and retention.

The council has demonstrated good progress in the time available in meeting the joint area review recommendations. However, it is very early days and there is insufficient evidence to change the joint area review judgement that its capacity to improve on its own is inadequate.

Yours sincerely



**FLO HADLEY**

Divisional Manager  
Office for Standards in Education



**JONATHAN PHILLIPS**

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