

9 December 2010

Ms Kath Tunstall
Strategic Director for Services to Children and Young People
City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
City Hall, Bradford
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Dear Ms Tunstall

Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment derives from a four point scale:

4	Performs excellently	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
3	Performs well	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
2	Performs adequately	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
1	Performs poorly	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, an assessment of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2009, while the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in the City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council perform adequately.

Just under half of all types of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better. The domestic childcare provider, nursery schools, pupil referral units and the further education colleges are good, as are the local fostering and adoption agencies. However, inspections show that only just over a third of secondary schools and 40% of school sixth forms are good or better and a small number of schools and two children's home are inadequate.

The joint area review in June 2008 found that services for both safeguarding and looked after children were good. An unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services in August 2009 found two areas of strength and an area for priority action which did not limit the children's services assessment.

National performance measures show a very large majority of outcomes are in line with the averages for England or for similar areas. Results are comparatively low for 11-year-olds, but still in line with similar areas. Despite a good increase in 2009, 16-year-olds do not do as well as their peers in similar areas. Gaps in achievement for children and young people from low-income families are getting narrower at all these stages of education. Nineteen-year-olds in Bradford gain slightly fewer qualifications than those in similar areas, but this continues to improve. Students from low-income families do as well as their peers elsewhere in gaining five good GCSEs or equivalent qualifications.

Key areas for further development

- Improve secondary schools and school sixth forms so that more are good or better.
- Improve the quality of local authority children's homes so that all are good or better.
- Sustain the improvements in national test results at the age of 11 and 16.

Outcomes for children and young people

Nearly all types of services and settings are successful at encouraging children and young people to live healthy lives, although childminders and children's homes do not do as well. Further development of services for children with emotional and mental health difficulties has taken place. The number of young women under the age of 18 who become pregnant is falling at a faster rate than nationally. The

number of mothers who are still breast-feeding their babies after six weeks has risen slightly and remains in line with that of similar areas. Although the number of children who are too overweight went down in 2009, a sustained trend of reduction has yet to be demonstrated. Until 2008 the number of children and young people taking part in sport regularly had been improving well. However, this figure fell slightly in 2009 to below the number found nationally. Recent data for 2010 provided by the local authority show renewed good improvement. In 2009, there was also a drop in the number of children and young people who were pleased with local parks. Parents of disabled children report they are less satisfied with the services provided than parents nationally.

Ofsted's inspections confirm that arrangements for keeping children and young people safe are good in almost all services and settings. The unannounced inspection of front-line child protection found the quality of some assessments of children's needs was not good enough and that the rate of re-referrals was very high. Recent data show better performance than found nationally in the number of times that children in care have to change placements. There are plans to reduce bullying, which include peer educators being trained in identifying and reporting bullying issues on behalf of their classmates in pupil referral units. Too many children are killed or seriously injured on the roads and the number of children and young people who are admitted to hospital because of deliberate or accidental injury has risen. Local partners are aware that they need to improve the arrangements for community safety and this is a priority for improvement in the Children and Young People's Plan.

Most services and settings in Bradford are good at helping children and young people to do well and enjoy their learning. Provision is not as strong in secondary schools and special schools. Results in national tests are around the average for children at the end of their Reception Year in school. However, over time, the performance of children at the end of the Reception Year is not improving and, although the gap between those who are not doing as well and their peers has narrowed, it is still too wide. The local authority has had some success in its work to help primary and secondary schools get better and the number not reaching the expected standards is reducing steadily. However, despite improvements since 2005, the standards reached by both 11- and 16-year-olds are not high enough. There is some variation in how well pupils from different minority ethnic groups do at the ages of both 11 and 16. Behaviour is improving in secondary schools but is still not good enough. The number of secondary pupils who are often absent from school has continued to reduce well. A re-organisation of special schools has recently taken place, with a number co-located; these new schools have yet to be inspected. Figures for 2009 show a very low number of special needs statements were completed on time, but a recent external report confirms considerable improvement this year.

Improving opportunities for children and young people to contribute to planning and reviewing local services is a priority for the local area. Over 2000 young people were involved in road show and consultation events with Bradford and Keighley Youth Parliament. Most types of services and other settings are good at involving young people in decision-making and activity in their communities. The number of 15-year-olds who take part in organised activities in their local area has dropped considerably

and is very low. Re-offending by young people in Bradford is better than in similar areas and by most measures the youth offending service works well. Since 2006 there has been a big improvement in reducing the number of young people who are caught offending for the first time. However, the number who get a custodial sentence has risen and is now only just below that of similar areas. Despite consistent good improvements in the number of young people who have offended who are taking part in education, training or work, performance remains below that found in similar areas.

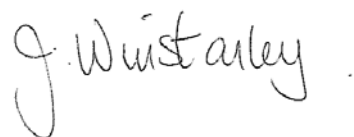
There is generally good promotion of young people's economic well-being in Bradford, although this is less successful in primary and secondary schools. Not all young people do as well as they can at the age of 19, although results are improving, particularly in the number who get five good GCSEs or equivalent qualifications by the time they are 19. Young people from low-income families do comparatively well. The steady improvement in reducing the number of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, employment or training has continued and the number of 17-year-olds in education or training, remains close to that of similar areas. However, recent data show a fall in the number of care leavers in education, employment or training. Encouragingly, there has been a rise in the number who are given a suitable place to live when they leave care.

Prospects for improvement

The Children and Young People's Plan shows the local authority and its partners have identified the right priorities and understand the need to address issues linked to poverty and deprivation in order to bring about sustained improvement. However, there remain weaknesses in attainment at all ages, in arrangements for community safety and in the quality of children's homes for which the local authority has responsibility. The local authority is well aware of these weaknesses and has a strong commitment to improving these areas. The inspection of front-line child protection services found good performance management systems in place and that managers knew the strengths and weaknesses of the service. The Youth Justice Board has judged that the youth offending team is performing excellently against the national indicators and has good capacity and capability to sustain and improve performance. The local authority provides appropriate support to weaker schools, although it still takes too long for inadequate schools to improve.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment