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

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in City of Bradford Metropolitan District 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.

Assessment judgement area	APA grade
Overall effectiveness of children's services	2
Being healthy	2
Staying safe	3
Enjoying and achieving	2
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	2
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

The City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council delivers services for children and young people that meet minimum requirements and are adequate overall. The management of services and the council’s capacity to improve are adequate.

Progress in relation to a number of priorities has been good, including raising standards of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2; reducing the number of young people aged 16 and over who are not in education, employment or training; and ensuring safeguarding arrangements continue to improve. Most children and young people, including those from vulnerable groups, are routinely involved in consultation regarding service improvements and recruitment. However, some education and health outcomes are proving difficult to improve. Levels of infant mortality and obesity are higher than in similar council areas. The impact of strategies to improve sexual health is adequate. Despite some improvements in primary schools, the rate of progress made by young people in secondary schools is not yet as good as in similar areas.

Being healthy

Grade 2

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. The council’s analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The rate of reduction in teenage conceptions is faster than in similar councils and nationally. ▪ There is good access to child and adolescent mental health services for young people requiring specialist services for substance abuse and for offenders. ▪ The health needs of looked after children and young people are prioritised and a high proportion of health assessments is carried out within the required timescales.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The oral dental health of five-year-olds is poor in comparison with their peers both regionally and nationally. ▪ Bradford has high rates of childhood obesity when compared to similar councils. ▪ Infant mortality rates remain significantly above the national and regional averages.

Staying safe

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.

Major strengths

- Safeguarding arrangements and services for looked after children are good.
- Children subject to child protection plans are reviewed on time and low numbers remain subject to child protection plans for more than two years.
- Initial and core assessments are completed within timescales and performance is much better than in similar councils and in England.
- There are excellent arrangements for tracking children missing from care and education which have dramatically reduced the number of missing children or young people.
- Looked after children are provided with placements that are stable.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- The timeliness of reviews of looked after children dipped slightly in 2007/8 and was the lowest performance among similar councils.
- The number of looked after children who are adopted is low compared to similar areas.
- The process for contributing to and completion of serious case reviews lacks sufficient rigour.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 2

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development overvalue the areas where progress has been made in relation to the grade criteria. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

Major strengths

- The proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE and results at Key Stage 2 have improved over recent years, closing the gap between the national average and that achieved in Bradford.
- The impact of the partners' strategy in raising attainment at foundation level and in primary schools is good.
- Over the last year, there has been a 57% reduction in days lost through fixed term exclusion. In the secondary phase, the percentage of permanent exclusions has been below the national average for three consecutive years.
- The number of young people leaving care with five or more GCSE grades at A* to C has risen to 11.1%. While still low, this above both the averages nationally and for similar councils.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Despite a steady improvement in results at most key stages, levels of attainment remain below those for similar areas and the national average.

- In 2007, the contextual value added indicator from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 was below average in 38% of schools. Ten secondary schools did not meet the target of 30% five A* to C passes including English and mathematics at GCSE.
- Despite showing slight improvement this year, the attendance of secondary school children remains below both similar councils and the national average.
- The proportion of young people in care who miss 25 days or more days of school is higher than in similar areas.

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's analysis gives too much weight to planned changes and underestimates some important weaknesses. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

Major strengths

- The council has maintained effective consultation mechanisms which have had a strong impact on the content of the children and young people's plan and the development of provision such as the opening of youth cafés. Young people in Bradford have a positive view of how much the council listens to their views.
- Work to prevent offending and to reduce the number of young people becoming involved in the youth justice system is effective and this reduction has been maintained over time. Re-offending rates are lower than those in similar council areas.
- There is good involvement of children and young people in the governance of children's services. Looked after children and young people have been involved in the procurement of supported accommodation for care leavers and the specification for the service.
- Young people play an influential role in the planning, development and quality assurance of the youth service.

Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Although the proportion of supervised juveniles in employment, education and training increased in the last year, it remains below the national average and Youth Offending Team family. Support for offenders being discharged from custody remains an area for improvement.
- Despite some improvement in the last year, offending by looked after children remains consistently higher than in similar councils.
- Recently developed mechanisms for consulting children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on strategic decisions have had insufficient time to make an impact.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 2

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area places too much emphasis on the strengths and do not pay sufficient attention to significant weaknesses. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The multi-agency approach to reducing the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training is proving effective. For example, the proportion of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are not in employment, education or training is below both similar councils and well below the national figure. The proportion of teenage mothers aged 16 to 19 and the proportion of care leavers who are in employment, education or training is above the national average. ▪ The proportion of young people, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, undertaking work-based learning improved significantly last year and is now above the national average. ▪ The proportion of young people completing apprenticeships has more than doubled since 2004, increasing at a rate faster than the national trend.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The average point score per GCE/VCE A/AS declined in 2007 and is below similar councils and well below the national figure. ▪ The proportion of young people achieving Level 3 qualifications declined in 2007 against improvements in similar councils and nationally. The gap in performance between Bradford and similar councils more than doubled in 2006/7 compared with 2005/6.

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

Grade 2

The capacity of the council to improve its services for children and young people is adequate and its management of these services is also adequate. While the council has continued to work well in some areas, it does not yet have a good track record of improvement across all outcomes.

Services for children are appropriately prioritised by members and officers and a recent restructuring of leadership roles has been completed. The children and young people's plan has been reviewed and refined. The priorities are fewer and well-founded, being based on the council's increasingly good knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses. Nevertheless, some success criteria relating to specific targets are too imprecise. The monitoring of performance is usually robust and leaders' accountability for improvement has been increased by developing greater clarity in

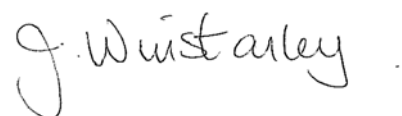
their roles and responsibilities in relation to each of the five outcomes. Closer alignment of the budget to identified priorities has sharpened the focus on improving value for money in all services. The council has maintained very good performance in relation to child protection and the systems for ensuring that looked after children stay safe are generally strong. The increasingly integrated approach to service delivery and partnership work is effective in supporting continued improvement in the economic well-being of young people.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ The council has high ambitions for children and young people and a good track record of improvement in a number of key areas.▪ Effective use of data to monitor performance and systems of accountability are leading to improved outcomes against a number of key priorities.▪ Partnerships are well used across a wide range of sectors to support improvement.▪ There are good opportunities for most young people to be engaged in shaping services.
Important weaknesses and areas for development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with adequate services but their involvement in strategic decision making remains weak. While there is an improved focus on value for money, it is too soon to judge the impact of this.▪ Some education and health outcomes are proving difficult to improve rapidly.

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
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection