

26 November 2007

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

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CITY OF BRADFORD METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment for your local authority. The judgements in the letter draw on your review of the Children and Young People's Plan 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 3

Bradford delivers at least minimum requirements across all areas and is good and better in the majority of areas. It has produced a Children and Young People's Plan of good quality and is making good progress on partnership priorities and some progress on district priorities. The council is engaged in promoting healthy lifestyles and acknowledges it needs to do more to reduce health inequalities. The council is aware that it has to do more for children and young people at risk of underachievement but it is taking effective steps to boost educational performance where it was weakest and in a number of key areas this is proving successful. Safeguarding performance is good across most aspects, with some improvements needed for those children and young people in council residential provision. Children and young people are exceptionally well engaged and there are improvements in the economic well being outcome which is impacting well on the most vulnerable. Based on the quality of the leadership shown by the council and its track record to date, it has good capacity to improve further.

Being healthy

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate.

The Children and Young People's Plan was based on a comprehensive needs analysis across the district which established the priorities for the plan. In addition a number of partnership focus areas were selected from the district priorities. These were agreed on the basis of where the greatest impact could be made by all agencies working together. Partnership priorities within the plan include improving emotional well being of all children and young people, promoting healthy lifestyles including participating in sport, choosing not to abuse substances including alcohol and tobacco and being sexually healthy.

The council is actively engaged in promoting healthy outcomes for children and young people across the majority of child-specific health targets. Strategies to promote breast-feeding are having a positive impact across most districts; however Bradford City remains 20% below its statistical neighbours. There has been slight decrease in the number of teenage conceptions at 51 per 1,000 15- to 17-year-olds which is above the statistical neighbours rate of 50 and significantly above the England rate of 41. A continuing trend in low birth weight and higher rates of infant mortality remains a partnership priority.

Good progress has been made on the Healthy Schools programme with 107 schools participating, exceeding the agreed target. Good preventative work in schools ensures children and young people are well informed regarding the dangers of substance misuse. All schools have anti-smoking and anti-bullying strategies in place. Focus on nutrition has seen the development of breakfast clubs and healthy eating in schools, with a programme in place to measure Body Mass Index (BMI). The commitment from other service providers to prevention is good and this is demonstrated by high rates of immunisation and good General Practice surveillance.

Mental health services are good across all indicators including a 52% increase in new cases, 13% increase in staffing levels and 18% increase in caseload. Children and young people in need of the service are accessing it appropriately. Good progress has been made in making the service fully comprehensive including 24-hour cover and good provision for children and young people with complex needs. Looked after children and young people have their health needs met well through regular checks.

Oral health for children and young people in Bradford is poor. Rates of dental decay have remained significantly high for a three year period and are the highest in the country. The great inequalities in oral health has resulted in an oral health action plan which highlights the need for water fluoridation; supervised school based brushing programmes, distribution of tooth brushes and oral health advice from

health visitors. Improving access to dental services has received significant investment recently.

The council has retained a good focus on health issues for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and support for vulnerable children and young people is a cross cutting theme for council planning. Recent restructure of service delivery has included a more strategic approach. Work still remains to ensure that young people with difficulties and/or disabilities have a smooth transition from paediatric services to adult care, including better links to GPs.

Areas for development

- Reduce health inequalities across the city.
- Reduce infant mortality.
- Improve child nutrition.
- Reduce teenage conception.
- Increase the focus on improving oral health in the Children and Young People's Plan.

Staying safe

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good.

Bradford's Local Safeguarding Children Board has established good structures to support all areas of its activity. The culture of safeguarding is firmly embedded across the council and its partners. Partnership and district priorities set out within the Children and Young People's Plan include the reducing accident and collision rates, reducing the number of children and young people in care and improving the quality of provision. Work has been undertaken in preventing bullying and reducing the impact of domestic violence on children and young people. The Bradford Local Safeguarding Children Board has taken the lead on reducing childhood accidents including those caused by road traffic accidents with a particular focus to reduce pedestrian related collisions for children and young people aged 5 to 15 and car passenger/driver accidents for teenage drivers. From 2001 to 2005, Bradford has seen a 57% reduction in those aged 0 to 15 being killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents and is on track to meet its target for 2010.

There has been a significant drop in the number of referrals made to the council that lead to an initial assessment. Coupled with this is a reduction in initial child protection conferences from 24.7 in 2005-06 to 20.6 in 2006-07. The number of core

assessments has also reduced. All these aspects have resulted in increased internal auditing to ensure that thresholds are being applied consistently. The council has recently launched its revised inter-agency safeguarding procedures to help reinforce shared understanding with its partners. Children on the Child Protection Register are, however, well monitored and all have a named social worker. They do not remain on the register for long and there is a low incidence of re-registration. Good preventative services are in place by way of children and family centres and there is a good multi-agency approach to safeguarding, including the appointment of a worker to promote child protection policies and training in the voluntary and faith sectors and a recent appointment of an anti-bullying coordinator.

There are effective measures in place to assure the quality of assessments and case management including an independent reviewing team. In addition the Children's Integrated Service Improvement Framework ensures that performance management and targets are shared within the service and are available to partners through a web portal. Two new multi agency protocols have been agreed providing procedures for children and young people missing from home and care which helps ensure a well directed response.

Reviews of looked after children and young people are carried out in time with 100% compliance. Reviews successfully monitor the delivery of personal education plans and ensure they are of good quality. All care leavers have a personal adviser and a high proportion of care leavers have effective and up to date pathway plans. Stability for looked after children and young people is good and all have a qualified social worker. Long term outcomes for looked after children and young people are good. The proportion who are adopted remains above that of most other councils.

For young people living in residential facilities, outcomes from four inspections undertaken in 2007 judged that three out of the four were inadequate in some aspects of protecting children from harm and helping them stay safe. For example one facility had buildings in a poor state of repair with some unsafe areas and in another protocols were not in place to ensure swift action following absconding.

Most children and young people report feeling safe and feel that their concerns are listened to. Young people's views are taken seriously and acted upon, for example a texting service is now available for children and young people to report their concerns regarding bullying. Young people in council care are involved in recruitment and selection of staff and in the design for promotional and guidance material.

Areas for development

- Improve safety for children and young people in council residential facilities.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution the council makes to ensure children and young people achieve at school and enjoy their education is adequate. Bradford is a district which has significant areas of social and economic deprivation. The council has continued to take action to effectively breakdown the range of educational barriers facing children and young people. Subsequently some areas have improved significantly, reducing the gap in attainment, most notably at Key Stage 2 and 4. Overall, however, standards in education remain below the national average in most areas and the support offered to primary schools causing concern has not always been as effective as it should be.

The quality of funded nursery provision is good in promoting children's development and well-being, helping them to meet early learning goals. Many children begin their education with a much lower than average skills base. The development of children's basic communication, literacy and numeracy by the end of the Foundation Stage is often good but standards still fall below national expectations and remain a key challenge. Results at Key Stage 1 are also a priority for the council, remaining below statistical neighbours in reading and mathematics. The council and Education Bradford have clear and comprehensive plans to address this underperformance through increased and carefully targeted intervention. The 2007 Key Stage 2 results improved markedly and show sustained improvement across all core subjects since 2004. Overall, since 2002 the rate of improvement across all key stages has been faster for children and young people of Pakistani heritage, progressively closing the achievement gap.

The strong upward trend in raising standards at Key Stage 4 has continued. The gap in performance between the area and the national average has been further reduced and for the first time the 2006 results were broadly in line with statistical neighbours. More notably there has been a continued rise in those gaining at least five A* to C GCSEs including maths and English. The overall attainment gap for looked after children and young people is also steadily reducing.

The Secondary School Improvement Programme managed by Education Bradford on behalf of the council is well led and actions taken are beginning to impact positively on provision. Two schools were removed from special measures in the last year and although given a notice to improve, both have been judged to be making good progress. Inspection findings for schools inspected 2006-07, show a high proportion judged to have a good or better capacity to improve. Findings also suggest the schools' self-evaluation process is enabling them to better understand their strengths and weaknesses. However, although 11 of the 77 primary schools inspected during 2006-7 were judged outstanding, the diverse quality and overall effectiveness of some primary provision gives cause for concern. Of the four primary schools in special measures, three are making inadequate progress. An extensive programme of support is underway which prioritises strengthening aspects of school leadership

and governance. All primary schools now have an allocated School Improvement Programme and school improvement officers. In both secondary and primary phases the very best practice in the district is beginning to be used effectively to help raise expectations and support improvement.

Behavioural strategies in all phases are proving effective with behaviour judged at satisfactory or better in most schools. Most pupils' views towards school are generally positive. Attendance in primary schools reached its highest rate in 2006-07 to be above the latest national average.

Areas for development

- Improve standards of attainment, particularly in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
- Improve the quality of support to primary schools identified as causing concern.
- Improve attendance rates, particularly for looked after children and young people.
- Reduce the achievement gap between different groups of children and young people.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 4

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council's contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding.

Since the last annual performance assessment excellent progress has been made by the council involving a wide array of children and young people in key decision making. There has been an extensive range of activities to capture the voice of children and young people at all levels of education, including looked after children and young people and other vulnerable groups. Recent surveys provide very positive feedback regarding the increased opportunities for young people to contribute their views. All children and young people's services now have Participation Champions who are also successfully engaging with parents. The Bradford and Keighley Youth Parliament has become increasingly prominent and further strengthened the voice of young people. Subsequently, their influence has driven a number of improvements to local services for children and young people.

There is a wide range of accredited programmes to recognise the achievements of children and young people. The introduction of Bradford's first Young Citizens Award Ceremony held in March 2007 actively celebrated the achievements of children and young people from a range of schools and community organisations. Similar events were also held to celebrate the work of looked after children and young people and

those involved in the youth service. Bradford's youth service is very effective in engaging with young people. It has successfully exceeded its targets to reach those aged 13 to 19 and to encourage them to regularly participate in youth service programmes. Feedback from children and young people indicate there are a range of places to go and things to do, but they want more information on what is happening locally. Plans for launching an interactive website in spring 2008 are well underway.

Very effective action continues to be taken by the council to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people. It is successfully delivering its youth justice plan through a raft of community projects, programmes and initiatives including a newly developed parent support website and an acclaimed multi agency young persons' support unit. In addition, the work of the youth offending team was recognised in 2007 by winning the Youth Justice Board award for its partnership with a local bus company which combats re-offending through restorative justice. Re-offending rates have reduced and compare favourably against both statistical neighbours and the national average and the number of first time offenders is reducing faster than the national rate.

Joint commissioning arrangements are very well established and good multi-agency working supports the social and emotional needs of the most vulnerable young people. Drug action teams, youth offending teams and child and adolescent mental health services work coherently to provide a mechanism by which young people can effectively cope and overcome the barriers they face. Effective actions have been taken to help combat anti-social behaviour and reports of anti-social behaviour have fallen. A comprehensive programme of behaviour awareness-raising training has been undertaken for staff in all children's services. The council actively promote the 'Respect' agenda and is effectively expanding initiatives to work with parents to help further endorse early intervention and prevention strategies.

Area for improvement

- Information regarding range of activities to children and young people in the local area.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving the economic well being for children and young people is good.

The council's 14–19 strategy and its progress towards the delivery of the new vocational diplomas, identified as an area of strength in the last two annual performance assessments, continues to be so. The introduction of the Confederations' Strategic Executive to replace the previous 14–19 strategy groups has provided increased strategic focus on and improved coordination. Strong collaboration between the council and all its key partners and stakeholders has ensured the 14–19 agenda is on schedule. The council has met the September

Guarantee. The on-line 14–19 prospectus is active and work is now underway on developing the common application process.

There has been good progress to strengthen the curriculum and widen progression opportunities. The number of young people aged 16–19 in learning is improving and now stands at around 70% with an increased number of learners studying level 2 qualifications. The six vocational centres linked directly with schools are working effectively to help prepare young people for the world of work. There are a growing number of well matched vocational options available with a significant increase in the number of 16- to 19-year-olds being awarded vocationally related qualifications. Links between all three colleges and local schools are good and 14–16 provision is developing well and effectively supporting progression. Much effort is being directed at consolidating all information and guidance services to ensure young people leaving school, college or progressing through to adult learning programmes receive clear and comprehensive advice. The proportion of Year 11 pupils progressing to further education has increased as has the percentage of Year 13 pupils progressing to higher education, including the highest ever number of looked after children and young people attending university this year.

Overall retention rates improved for two out of the three local colleges and are in line with the national average. The proportion of young people achieving Level 2 and Level 3 by the age of 19 improved in 2006 to 61% and 38% respectively. Both are below the national average but broadly in line with statistical neighbours. Overall success rates for those aged 16–18 at one of the three colleges have declined sharply at all levels over three years to well below the national average, however, the college has recently merged with a high performing college in Leeds. There has been significant growth in the take up of apprenticeships in 2006 and, although success rates for apprenticeships remain low, there is an upward trend of improvement. Links with employers are good.

A raft of initiatives to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training, including offering a flexible approach to the development of Education to Employment (E2E) programmes, are proving very successful. A dedicated member of staff for young people not in education, employment or training has provided a coordinated approach on behalf of the whole partnership. Over the last year there has been a further reduction in the size of the cohort, for nearly all groups including vulnerable young people. The proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, employment and training in 2006 (November to January) stood at 9.8%, a 25% improvement since 2004, against an improvement of 4% nationally. Recent monthly data shows further marked improvements in the rate. In addition, the number of young people of minority ethnic heritage not in education or training also reduced markedly. The council is keen to lower the number of white boys eligible for free school meals who are not in education, employment and training.

Areas for development

- Improve success rates for those aged 16–18.

- Increase the number of supervised young people in education, employment or training.

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

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council's service management is good. There is strong and effective corporate leadership, which has been significantly strengthened by the appointment of a Children's Services Director from April 2007. Senior staff and council members are fully engaged in listening to all stakeholders, and working positively with partners at all levels. Robust inter-agency governance arrangements ensure effective strategic direction and thorough performance management through the Children's Integrated Service Improvement Framework, with a web portal available to all partners. Based on the quality of the leadership shown by the council and its track record to date in breaking down the barriers for children young people, it has a good capacity to improve further.

The education Bradford partnership is now working effectively with the establishment of a more robust contract management board. This board is chaired by the Chief Executive and includes member participation and has much clearer terms of reference and reporting arrangements. The council has developed a well considered risk management approach to the shortfall in education funding and additional targeted funding of £500k has been agreed to focus on further improving Key Stage 2 results. An education strategy group has been established with an independent chair to ensure that the council is informed regarding wider debates including parental engagement, under achievement of boys, school provision and social cohesion.

The council is well on target to deliver local services. Some 24 extended school clusters have been reduced to 14 geographical localities to ensure focused delivery. Eighteen children's centres are now fully operational. Some 48% of schools are delivering the full core offer as part of the Extended Schools Initiative, ahead of both regional and national averages.

Needs analysis is well supported by effective collection of data and detailed evaluation to establish priorities and target resources. A good start has been made in relation to the common assessment framework with pilots across a number of geographical areas. Good progress has been made with regard to representations from the voluntary and community sector with the establishment of a forum ensuring communication, consultation and participation at appropriate levels.

Work force analysis ensures good action to recruit and retain staff and a multi-agency workforce strategy group has undertaken an initial audit to determine workforce requirements across districts.

Areas for development

- Further develop joint working arrangements.
- Continue to ensure effective risk management for any budget shortfall.

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 period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection