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26 November 2007

Mrs Jane Portman
Executive Director, Children and Families Services
Bournemouth Borough Council
Town Hall
Bourne Avenue
Bournemouth
BH2 6DL

Dear Mrs Portman

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN BOURNEMOUTH BOROUGH 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, your action plan arising from the joint area review 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

Bournemouth Borough Council delivers an adequate level of services for children and young people. Within this performance there are some notable strengths, such as the council's good corporate parenting. Over the past year the council has maintained or improved outcomes for children and young people who are looked after and care leavers in each of the five *Every child matters* aspects. In the wider arena, outcomes for Bournemouth's children and young people with regard to being healthy, staying safe and making a positive contribution are good, but the council has not demonstrated consistently sustained impact over time in every outcome. With regard to outcomes for enjoying and achieving, the council's performance is now adequate overall. Bournemouth's children and young people could be making better progress at school. Outcomes with regard to achieving economic well-being are adequate, not least because of the comparatively high percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training.

Being healthy

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect are good.

The council is proactive, innovative and inclusive in providing its health related services and has very strong partnerships. Where improvements have reached a plateau, the council and its partners have reviewed interventions and developed very specific targeted approaches. An example is the work undertaken by the council and its partners to reduce teenage pregnancies. Here, the council targeted its interventions by undertaking an analysis of data at ward level to identify trends and understand the causal effects of teenage pregnancy. The early signs are that this more targeted approach is having a positive impact. The council has made good progress overall and has reduced again the annual number of teenage conceptions.

In the past 12 months, the council has continued to improve its performance in the promotion of healthy lifestyles and good health for children and young people. Smoking in pregnancy is declining and breast-feeding rates and immunisation levels are above the national average. The council is working together with its partners to tackle the key priorities of teenage conception rates, sexual health and substance misuse with increased training for key practitioners. Targeted work on reducing obesity and increasing recreational activity has excellent potential, but it is still too early to judge its definitive impact. The council has secured the commitment of all schools to the Healthy Schools Programme and 60% of Bournemouth's schools have now achieved Healthy Schools Status. Opportunities are taken to involve and educate young people through service developments. An example here is the involvement of children in designing menus for a new contract with a provider to deliver healthy school meals.

Substance misuse admissions to hospital are high and a lower proportion of young people are receiving treatment than the regional average. The council have identified that the high level of admissions is due to alcohol misuse and is developing multi-agency initiatives to reduce this. These initiatives have yet to make an impact but include promising aspects, including a conference on alcohol use arranged and led by young people.

There is a fully comprehensive and effective Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) which operates at all four tiers. There are a number of very positive initiatives, including an integrated care partnership between CAMHS and learning difficulties and disability services, which enable children and young people to receive the appropriate support. CAMHS is accessible, offers a range of support and training to partner agencies, and provides targeted services for vulnerable groups. School nurses are effectively involved in the preventative strategy.

Health workers are part of the new multi-agency team for looked after children and young people and contribute to the high level of provision for their health needs. Performance is good with regard to ensuring that looked after children and young people have timely health assessments and dental checks.

Areas for development

- Reduce hospital admissions due to alcohol misuse.
- Increase young people's access to treatment for substance misuse.

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 are good.

There are appropriate and agreed thresholds for access to child protection and family support services. The percentage of referrals is slightly above the national average. The number of children on the child protection register has increased but remains below the national average. All children on the child protection register are allocated to a social worker, all reviews are held on time and initial child protection conferences are held within the required 15 days.

The number of re-registrations on the child protection register has declined and is now low. The council believes that this decline is underpinned by the effective multi-agency support it provides to children and families. However, it lacks detailed evidence in this area as it has not audited the reasons for this apparent improvement in sufficient depth. The council is committed to the participation of parents and children in the child protection process. This is good: approximately half of relevant children and young people aged over 10 participated in their child protection conferences. Performance with regard to undertaking initial assessments within timescales is very good. The number of core assessments undertaken has more than doubled but remains well below the national average. The timeliness of the completion of such assessments is also below the national average.

The common assessment framework is being implemented incrementally across the borough and the authority is piloting the 'budget holding lead professional' initiative. These developments are positive and the authority is looking to maximise learning through this process.

A focus on preventative work has led to a reduced number of looked after children and young people in Bournemouth. The council's good and improving performance with regard to looked after children and young people is a reflection of its strong corporate parenting. The timeliness of reviews for these children is good, the stability of their placements has improved and fewer of them had more than three placement moves in the last year compared to the national average. The stability of long-term placements has improved and is now in line with the national average. Nearly all

newly looked after children and young people are placed within 20 miles of their home. Only 74.5% of looked after children and young people were allocated to a qualified social worker in 2006-07. However, the recent establishment of a multi-agency looked after children's team has enabled the council to address this issue so that all looked after children and young people now have an allocated social worker. One of the principles underpinning the formation of the looked after children's team is improved stability for these young people, including continuity in the allocation of their assigned social worker. The council are also planning to increase the range of placements through recruiting more foster carers.

Adoption work has improved very significantly. The council had a higher proportion of children placed within 12 months of the adoption decision than the national average and the number of children adopted last year was very high.

The routine work of agencies and key partnerships aligns to ensure that Bournemouth takes all reasonable steps to secure the safeguarding of children and young people. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) appropriately draws on wide representation and is currently engaged in reviewing its full remit and priorities for improvement. The LSCB benefits from joint work with Poole because expertise is shared and there are advantages in developing consistent protocols covering both boroughs. For example, the LSCB has developed and implemented an anti-bullying policy where the co-operation of schools in monitoring bullying is having a positive effect on reducing its incidence.

Areas for development

- Audit the low percentage of child protection re-registrations.
- Review thresholds for core assessments to ensure the proportion undertaken is appropriate.
- Improve the timeliness of the completion of core assessments.

Enjoying and achieving

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.

Children are getting a good start to their education. The quality of early years provision in Bournemouth is better than that found nationally, so children leave the Foundation Stage with better developed skills and abilities than is normally the case. Results at Key Stage 1 dropped slightly in 2006, but remain above the national average. Standards attained by Year 6 pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2006 were in line with the national average, but pupils made less progress than average during their time in this key stage. At Key Stage 3, the council's focus on increasing the percentage of pupils gaining Level 6 and above paid off. Pupils made better progress than average and results in English, mathematics and science were above the

national average. At Key Stage 4, standards were just below national average and the progress made by this cohort of students was below the national average. In statistical terms, this means that, on average, students in Bournemouth attained at least one grade lower in one GCSE subject than similar students nationally. In addition, in four secondary schools, less than 30% of leavers obtained five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics. The proportion of students achieving at least one GCSE at grade G or above improved in 2006 to meet the national average.

School inspections report that children and young people across the authority enjoy their education very much. Children and young people's attitudes and behaviour have improved since last year, although there are pockets of poor behaviour in two secondary schools. Fixed-term and permanent exclusions in schools are below the national average overall. All children and young people who have been permanently excluded from school now have at least 20 hours of education per week. School attendance is broadly in line with the national average and unauthorised absence is below the national average in both phases. The percentage of looked after children and young people with attendance difficulties is high, but is explained convincingly by low cohort numbers combined with the council's knowledge of the individuals concerned. Justifiably, the council is proud of the educational performance of looked after children and young people, whose performance at GCSE is above the national average.

The council discharges its statutory responsibilities with regard to pupils with special educational needs effectively. All statements for these pupils are completed within 18 weeks. In all schools inspected, except one primary made subject to a category of concern, children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were judged to be making at least satisfactory progress.

The number of schools in categories of concern has fallen since the last APA. School improvement services have moved relatively quickly to support schools and monitoring inspections judge the council's support for schools in categories to be good. However, despite the council re-launching its school improvement strategy last year, a further school received a notice to improve in January 2007. In response, the new senior team has recently realigned its categorisation of schools and is providing greater challenge to those schools where it judges that outcomes are not good enough.

The council is on target to deliver a further five children's centres. Senior officers have begun to think creatively about ensuring that the most vulnerable families are accurately targeted so that they benefit from universal services provided by the council.

Areas for development

- Improve the overall progress of pupils from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4.
- Raise the percentage of students attaining five A* - C at GCSE, including English and mathematics.

- Develop a clear strategy to ensure that universal services are accurately targeted on the most vulnerable children and families.

Making a positive contribution

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.

Advice and counselling provision to children and young people are well signposted and targeted effectively. Services are in place for children and young people needing support at challenging times. There is successful mentoring and support from a wide range of multi-agency initiatives for children and young people who are not developing socially and emotionally. For example, there is a programme of summer schools in partnership with other agencies and the voluntary sector to build self-esteem and self-reliance for young people. Parenting programmes are well established.

Bournemouth has a strong, longstanding culture of both seeking and acting on children and young people's views. Children and young people's involvement in making decisions about the services provided by the council is given a very strong focus and, as a result, services and activities are shaped to meet children and young people's needs. The Young People Go Loud group has been established as a vehicle for the involvement of children and young people in service planning and review. The group includes a network of other groups representing looked after children, Black and minority ethnic children and young people, and young carers. The council was able to evidence a list of very significant changes that had taken place because of children's participation. Over the past year, for example, children and young people have participated in the design groups for a skate park, a children's gym, a school and a community facility.

The Tellus2 survey demonstrates that Bournemouth's children and young people participate and give their views on a wide range of issues more frequently than young people nationally, and have a more positive view of the degree to which their schools listen to their views than do children and young people nationally.

The council aims to have all children and young people, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, participating in their reviews. There is clear evidence to demonstrate that children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities contribute their views and feel fully involved in making decisions about their futures. Similarly, the participation of looked after children and young people in their reviews is very good. However, the percentage of care leavers who have pathway plans and a personal advisor is below the national average. The new looked after children's team aims to monitor and improve this performance.

The strategy to improve leisure and recreational opportunities within the community has been an important part of the approach in tackling anti social and pre-offending behaviour. The council is further developing links with the Youth Offending Team through locality teams. Bournemouth and Poole have secured a good reduction in re-offending rates, which are now 7.1% below the England and Wales national average. There has also been a percentage point reduction between 2005-06 and 2006-07 in the percentage of looked after children and young people who were subject to a reprimand, final warning or conviction.

Area for development

- Improve services for care leavers so that they all have pathway plans and personal advisors.

Achieving economic well-being

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.

Across the council, there has been a notable increase in the provision of affordable child care places. Provision in this area is now above the national average. Eight schools are now delivering the full extended 'core model' and the good practice of one of these has recently been recognised by the Department for Children, Schools and Families. The Children's Information Service meets national standards and a very high percentage of users rate this service good or better.

Strong corporate parenting promotes the economic well-being of looked after children within Bournemouth. They receive priority for young apprenticeship positions provided by the council and a 50% discount to all council-run leisure services. The percentage of care leavers housed in suitable accommodation (92%) has risen sharply and is a good improvement on the position last year. The council has plans to ensure that there is dedicated housing for all care leavers in the future. However, its strategy for meeting any housing shortfall for other vulnerable groups is not as clear. The proportion of care leavers still in education, employment or training at 19 years old is higher than last year and is now very good. A high percentage of young people aged over 14 years with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have a transition plans to support their move to adult social services within Bournemouth.

The percentages of young people achieving Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications respectively by the age of 19 are in line with national averages and are satisfactory. The average point score for those students entered for General and Vocational Certificate of Education A and AS level qualifications was above the national average in 2006.

Progress to develop clear pathways for vocational education across Bournemouth has been too slow. No gateway submissions for new diplomas were made in 2007. The council reports that partnerships are established to submit bids to run four diplomas, but currently much provision remains centred on individual institutions, with no clear pathways that enable students to choose the best mix of courses across different institutions. The development of a web-based, borough-wide prospectus has been delayed. It is expected to go live this month, but this delay has contributed to the lack of coherence surrounding 14–19 curriculum pathways. There remains a lack of access to a full curriculum, including appropriate vocational education, for those students who would benefit most from this.

These factors have contributed to the comparatively high percentage of 16–18 year olds who are not in education, employment, or training. A plethora of initiatives has been introduced to bring this percentage down and current data demonstrate some success. Nevertheless, the percentage of such young people has grown year on year since 2004 and, despite a reported recent drop, is above the national rate. Linked to the lack of clear vocational pathways is the failure of the youth offending team to ensure that 90% of young offenders under its supervision should be in employment, education or training.

Areas for development

- Develop coherent partnership working across institutions in order to provide 14–19 year old students with clear pathways to a full curriculum, including vocational education.
- Reduce the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training.
- Develop a clear strategy to ensure that likely shortfalls in housing for young people from vulnerable groups are addressed.

Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council has adequate capacity to improve its services for children and young people, and its management of these services is satisfactory. Over the past nine months there has been wholesale change of senior leaders within the Children's Services Directorate of the council. A new Director of Children's Services took up post in January 2007 and new appointments have been made to two second tier posts since that date. The third post within this tier remains vacant.

The new team demonstrate strong ambition and have a clear vision for improvement. This is centred on ensuring that universal services are creatively managed and aligned in order to focus sharply on reducing inequalities. The 'Change for Children' board is making satisfactory progress towards fully integrated multi-

agency working as a Children's Trust from April 2008. However, arrangements to pool budgets in order to capitalise on partnership working across agencies have, to date, been limited. The council recognises the potential of joint commissioning arrangements across a wider range of functions in collaboration with the Borough of Poole. The political will exists to support such arrangements.

The council accepts that its challenge is to ensure that multi-agency working is fully integrated and embedded in practice at all levels in the system. To this end, it is currently finalising a workforce development strategy with the aim of building the capacity of all staff to deliver improvement in this essential area. The council notes that systems for performance management, although potentially strong, should focus more clearly on the need to improve outcomes in the five *Every child matters* areas for children and young people.

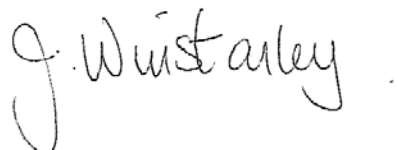
The current Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) is now two years old. Several key milestone dates within it have now passed. Sensibly, the new Director has instigated a review with the aim of ensuring that a new CYPP provides the rationale for, and underpins, improvements in universal services for all children and young people whilst maintaining and improving outcomes for the most vulnerable.

Areas for development

- Secure arrangements for joint commissioning and pooled budgets in order to maximise the impact of multi-agency working.
- Ensure the new CYPP includes precise baselines, targets for improvements, timelines, resource implications and success criteria in order that progress for all children and young people against the five outcomes may be more precisely measured than is possible at present.

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, flowing style.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection