



Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Mrs Blenkinsop

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF BOLTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings on the performance of the education and social care services within your authority. We are grateful for the information that you provided to support this process and for the time made available by yourself and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues at our meeting with you on 25 July.

Being healthy

Outcomes in this area are good. Most schools inspected make good or very good sports provision for their pupils. This is well supported through a good range of authority-wide initiatives that are resulting in increased participation in extra-curricular as well as curricular sporting activities. These initiatives are underpinned by strong partnerships, such as that established with the University of the First Age. A local Public Service Agreement target is being negotiated to encourage acceleration towards the target of ensuring that all children have weekly access to two or more hours of physical education. Over three quarters of schools are involved in the National Healthy Schools Standard initiative and schools with a high proportion of pupils entitled to free schools meals are targeted for additional support. The school meals service has conducted some work on promoting healthy eating, for example through improved menu options. However, the council recognises that further development is needed in this area.

The co-ordination of teenage pregnancy support has improved and the recent Ofsted inspection of the Local Education Authority found that support for pregnant schoolgirls was excellent. Under-16 conception rates for the area have fallen by 20 per cent over the past five years and local action plans to deliver further improvement are well developed. Virtually all schools inspected comply with the requirements for sex and relationship education.

Over the last year, there has been further improvement to 85 per cent, in the proportion of looked after children receiving the required health care checks. There has also been further investment in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) that has resulted in improved coverage and timeliness of response from the service, particularly for vulnerable groups. One example is the effective response to referrals from the Youth Offending Team. The area continues to have above average levels of substance misuse by young people and the council and its partners are investing considerable time and resource to tackle this and to improve outcomes for young people in this regard. However, CSCI inspections show that action is needed to ensure that all children's homes meet the requirements of the National Standard in relation to first-aid and medication

Staying safe

Overall, outcomes in this area are good. The council's arrangements for safeguarding children are strong and effective and safe transfer of responsibilities from the Area Child Protection Committee to the new Local Children's Safeguarding Board is well underway. The council is committed to maintaining the quality of its services to keep children safe as new arrangements are implemented. Prompt action has been taken on the Ofsted recommendation for annual health and safety monitoring. School inspections show that provision for pupils' welfare, care and safety is generally good and all schools now comply with child protection procedures. There is a good a range of specific initiatives to address local needs.

The council has made excellent progress in increasing the responsiveness of core and initial assessments from a high base line last year, despite the above average levels of referrals received from children and families. There has also been good progress to reduce levels of re-referrals, although these remain significantly above the average for similar councils. All children on the child protection register have an allocated social worker and all statutory reviews were completed on time last year. A very high proportion of children and young people actively contribute to their statutory reviews. Further progress has also been made to extend placement choice and to improve planning timescales for children. Coverage of assessments remains comparatively low and there has been a small dip in long-term placement stability which needs to be tackled. However, the council has clearly identified good reasons for these patterns and is monitoring the situation carefully. A higher than average proportion of early years providers are subject to action at initial inspection. However, the council is tackling this issue satisfactorily by providing improved and more extensive pre-registration training for providers.

Children from black and minority ethnic communities appear to be under-represented in both the child protection and children in need services. The council has reviewed its performance in this area and reports a very high take-up of Surestart places by children from these communities. Action has also been taken, including the use of

Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, to improve take-up of services in order to develop safeguarding protocols with local Mosques and to strengthen community cohesion more generally.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory though there are some variations that need to be tackled. Support for early years education is good. There has been a much higher than average growth in child care places and the quality of nursery provision is generally good. Results at Key Stages 1 and 2 are sound but there has been some decline recently. At Key Stage 1, for example, there was a slight fall in results in all three-core subjects between 2003 and 2004. Similarly, at Key Stage 2, there has been a slight fall in mathematics and science results over the last two years. At Key Stage 3, results in mathematics are sound but, in English and science, they fell below the national average last year. The rates of improvement in those areas have also been below the average nationally and for similar authorities. The proportion of pupils gaining one or more grades A* to G at GCSE is average but the proportion gaining five or more grades A* to C is below average. The progress made by pupils at the primary level is sound. After that, however, it declines, particularly between Key Stages 2 and 3. This has been the case for the last three years. Thus, pupils are not building on their earlier promise.

Attendance is satisfactory overall. However, the absence rates for looked after children have been stubbornly high for the last three years. In secondary schools, the rate of exclusions is in line with the national average. In the special phase, it is far better than that. The proportion of Year 11 pupils looked after for a year or more sitting at least one GCSE is above the average for similar councils. The proportion of care leaver achieving one A* to G at GCSE is at an acceptable level. The proportion gaining five A* to C grades is less than half the national average. School absences for this group remain a little above the average for similar councils.

The management of Special Educational Needs provision is a strength of the authority and pupil referral units have received good individual inspection reports. The authority provides strong support for arts and cultural development through its music service and a wide range of collaborative projects involving professional artists and performers. Rapid progress has been made recently in reducing the number of schools in Ofsted categories of concern. There is now no school in need of special measures and the one remaining school with serious weaknesses has made clear improvements.

The work being undertaken by head-teachers from schools with significant numbers of Pakistani heritage learners to share best practice and to pilot specific initiatives, such as role mentors, should help deliver better outcomes for children and help improve levels of inclusion. There is also evidence of strong partnership working between the council and community organisations in this area.

Making a positive contribution

The council delivers good outcomes in this area. There is improving performance in reducing levels of youth offending, including levels of cautions or convictions of looked after children, which are below average. Recidivism rates are beginning to fall and there has been a reduction in new entrants to the youth justice system. Over 90 per cent of supervised juveniles are in education; employment or training and all care leavers have an allocated personal advisor and a pathway plan. Ofsted judged the Local Education Authority's strategy for social inclusion to be highly satisfactory, although some stakeholders were not entirely clear about the direction of that strategy. There is a range of initiatives to increase social inclusion, one example being the integration of Somali asylum seekers through the Gateway Protection Scheme. Overall, levels of involvement and participation are high and have been well assessed in recent inspections, although the council recognises the scope to improve feedback to young people on the outcomes of consultation. School inspections shows that with few exceptions, nearly all schools are performing well in the way they respond to bullying, racism or other forms of harassment. The youth service was recently inspected and found to have made reasonable progress from its previous unsatisfactory rating. The service is now judged to be making a good contribution to young people's personal and social development. However, there is still considerable scope for further improvement in this area and this has been recognised by the council in its forward plans.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. The Ofsted report of 2004 and the KPMG report of 2005 both identified the need for further strategic development in 14 to 19 provision. The council's support for young people in this age group has improved and is now rated as satisfactory although it acknowledges the further work required to raise standards at Key Stage 4 and increase participation rates post 16. Ofsted school inspection reports show that secondary and special schools provide satisfactory post 16 provision. The Pupil Referral Unit's Youth Challenge 'Building Skills' programme has attracted particular praise for its contribution to developing alternative curriculum choices for vulnerable young people. The council has no school with a sixth form that is judged to be inadequate.

The recent local strategic review showed that children and young people in the south of the Borough were not getting the same choices at Year 9 and Year 11 as in other Bolton schools. In the north, level 3 work was found to be strong but there was under-provision at levels 1 and 2. The average point scores for young people entered for GCE/VCE or A/AS course in schools have been in line with, or above, statistical neighbours in recent years. However, the proportion of pupils gaining 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE or its equivalent is nine percentage points below the national average. The overall proportion of young people aged 16 to 19 not in education; employment or training is above average. The proportion of care leavers in education, training and employment is 69.9% against a target of 75 per cent for 2005/06. There is

evidence of good support for these young people in practical ways that can help improve outcomes further. Examples include provision of laptops and funding for driving lessons. There is also a range of innovative work underway with partners, for 14 – 19 year old young people with disabilities, to deliver a wider range of options for training and employment. One example is the work of Connexions and others to establish a Young Enterprise Scheme.

Over a third of young parents are in education training or work and the authority reports that it has the second highest proportion in the country of teenage parents accessing the care2learn funding for child care for those in further education. Young people looked after are given sound support in developing personal development plans and in tackling barriers to learning. Use of direct payments is increasing for parents and carers of disabled children and for 16 and 17 year olds with disabilities. The council has a clear understanding of what further improvements need to be made in this area and is tackling them through improved strategic planning, increasingly allied to partnership work.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high participation rates in Healthy Schools initiatives and good sports provision in schools • good health care for Looked After Children • good collaboration between CAMHS and other services and increasing levels of investment in this area • good progress in reducing under 16 conception rates and support for teenage parents. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor the impact of the co-ordinated initiatives to tackle levels of substance misuse • ensure all children’s homes meet the requirements of national standards for first aid and medication.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • excellent progress to further improve responsiveness of initial and core assessments • all children on the Child Protection Register have an allocated social worker and statutory reviews are completed to time • almost all younger children are looked after in family or adoptive placements. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve the coverage of initial assessments • further improve long term stability of placements for children looked after • increase take up of services by black and minority ethnic children and young people and families • reduce the proportion of early years providers subject to actions.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good early years provision • high proportion of supervised juveniles in education, training and employment • below average rate of authorised absences in primary schools • better than average performance in terms of permanent exclusions and length of exclusions for those educated otherwise than at schools • management of SEN • strong support for creative development. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arrest falls in performance in Key Stages 1 and 2; increase value added, particularly between Key Stages 2 and 3 and improve English and Science results at Key Stage 3 • increase the proportion of children overall gaining 5+ A*-C at GCSE • improve attendance rates and educational attainment of looked after children especially those receiving 5+ GCSEs.

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • integration of Somali Asylum Seekers through the Gateway Protection Schemes • a high proportion of looked after children are contributing to their reviews • a below average proportion of looked after children receiving cautions or convictions • a high proportion of supervised juveniles in education, training and employment • all care leavers have allocated personal advisors and pathways plans. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complete implementation of the action plan developed to respond to the recommendations of the recent youth service inspection.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • youth challenge PRU 'Building Skills' programme • over a third of young parents in education training or work • a high proportion of teenage parents accessing care2learn funding for child care • a more strategic approach is now being developed to provision for 14 to 19 year olds. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that young people across the borough have equal access to all levels of provision • improve performance at GCSE • reduce the proportion of 16 to 19 year olds not in education, employment or training.

Service management

In both the November 2003 Children's Inspection and the 2004 performance rating, social services were judged to have excellent capacity for improvement. While the 2004 Ofsted inspection rated education as being satisfactory. However, the recent restructuring and refocusing of support for schools has increased the capacity for improvement in education to good. These factors, taken together, lead to an overall rating of promising in this area.

The Ofsted inspection of the LEA judged that the council's decision-making, targeting of resources to priorities and leadership by members in relation to Education Services were good. Leadership by senior managers was satisfactory with effective partnerships in place to support priorities. The council's strategies to promote continuous improvement, including Best Value, were judged to be highly satisfactory. There have been recent clear improvements in the effectiveness of support for schools in Ofsted categories. However, the youth service was judged unsatisfactory and whilst reasonable progress is now being made, there is still more to do.

There is good continuity of social work and teaching staff. Staff turnover rates in children's social care are low but vacancy levels have increased. The council reports that this is partly the result of the number of new posts created during the last year and in partly because of other workforce development initiatives. There has been significant reduction in sickness absence among social workers and excellent progress in increasing the proportion of residential childcare staff with National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ level 3) in childcare and children's social workers with Post Qualifying awards (PQ1).

There has been a reduction in the total budget for each child under 18 for children's social care services over the past year. The plan for 2005/06 is £290 per head compared to an average of £352 for similar councils. A slightly lower proportion of the overall budget for social services is allocated for children's social care compared to the average for similar councils. This is in line with historical spending patterns locally and may also be affected by the dis-aggregation of social care budgets that is currently underway. Spend per person on family support has increased and is now more in line with other councils. In education the council has a low percentage of surplus places. The council continues to passport money to schools in full. The restructuring of education services is leading to clear improvements in the support offered to schools and in the way that it is targeted on areas of greatest need.

Recent inspections by CSCI and Ofsted show that education and social care management teams display some very good leadership and vision. There are also increasingly robust performance management processes in place, particularly within social services. Arrangements for safe transfer to new arrangements for the delivery and management of children's services in Bolton are well developed.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Healthy life-styles are promoted for all children and young people:

- impact of measures to tackle substance misuse
- improvement in the administration of medicines and first aid standards in the council's children's homes.

Staying safe

The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:

- coverage of initial assessments
- referral rates for children in need and access to services for black and minority ethnic children and young people.

Looked after children live in safe environments and are protected from abuse and exploitation:

- long term stability of placements for looked after children.

Enjoying and achieving

Action is taken to ensure that educational provision 5-16 is of good quality:

- educational attainment, particularly at Key Stages 3 and 4.

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy and achieve:

- attainment and attendance of looked after children.

Achieving economic well-being

Action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is planned and delivered in a co-ordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16-19) is of good quality:

- equality of access to 14-19 provision across the borough
- impact of strategies to reduce the overall proportion of young people not in education, employment or training.

Final judgements

Please see your final annual performance assessment judgements attached at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely



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Office for Standards in Education



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

APA final judgements 2005: Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	2
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	3

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Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Very good
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good/promising
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate