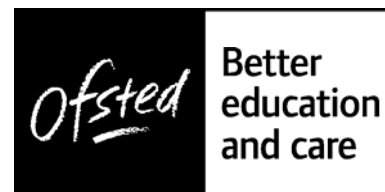


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Making Social Care
Better for People



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1 December 2005

Dear Colleagues

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 25 July 2005 to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your authority. We are grateful for the information which you provided to support this process and for the time made available by yourself and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

Being healthy

Outcomes in this area are good with evidence of strong partnerships working to improve Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and services for looked after children.

Teenage conception rates are low compared to national averages and the incidence is declining. The proportion of schools involved in the Healthy Schools Standard is high and participation levels in sport, particularly at secondary stage are also good. The authority is developing its extended school provision in partnership with Health.

The CAMHS service has a history of long waiting lists and its management is currently under review by the Strategic Health Authority. The CAMHS strategy group, which is led by the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and has multi-agency representation, is working effectively towards improvements. The authority is now gathering data on the outcomes of the work of the CAMHS service to assess effectiveness and has conducted an audit of needs as part of the Local Preventative Strategy. CAMHS rapid assessment and intervention service has reduced waiting times from 7 months to 13 weeks over the last year and the service has also achieved 100% performance in the assessment of acute referrals from the Youth Offending Team. Some innovative projects have been developed to address specialist needs and an integrated pathway for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties is being explored. The council's focus for the

coming year will be on early intervention to reduce referrals to CAMHS, which has been linked to joint training in schools.

For looked after children and young people there is a dedicated CAMHS service called LOCATE. Procedures for assessments and meeting the health needs of looked after children are co-ordinated by a Community Paediatrician, a dedicated nurse and social workers from the looked after and adolescent teams. The proportion of children receiving regular health and dental checks has shown a good improvement this year, although performance is still slightly below the average for similar authorities. Health action plans are completed for all disabled young people at their transitions planning review and there is a focus on health needs within all reviews of disabled children in need. No specific needs of black and minority ethnic children related to improving health have been identified.

Staying safe

Outcomes for children in this area are good overall. Child protection practice is sound. A robust framework and procedures for safeguarding children are in operation and these are managed and reviewed in partnership with relevant agencies. Overall children are provided with safe settings. Ninety percent of primary schools inspected last year were good or very good at caring for pupils welfare, health and safety, although a small minority of primary schools inspected were not complying with child protection procedures.

The council has maintained its 100% record of allocating social workers to, and reviews of, children on the child protection register. Numbers on the register are low and there is a high spend on family support to develop preventative work. Re-registrations on the child protection register are comparatively high, but the numbers are small and the council is satisfied that they do not represent a trend. There is a good emphasis on interagency training, both in provision and review, and the council is piloting training on fabricated and induced illness. The council has increased awareness of the impact of domestic violence and has developed a co-ordinated response for referrals.

The timeliness of completion of both initial and core assessments of Children In Need has improved, but is still below the authority's own target. However the percentage of assessments carried out are small, especially in comparison to the increased rate of referrals. The council has identified that this low percentage has been affected by staffing capacity issues and the introduction of Care First, however services are being set up for children in advance of core assessments being completed.

The number of looked after children continues to decrease and stability of placements remains very good. A high proportion of looked after children are in foster care and the percentage fostered with relatives and friends remains high. The percentage of children placed for adoption is still small, although there has been some improvement

this year. Placement choice is limited for some children and young people, particularly those with complex and multiple needs, disabled children with challenging behaviour, and those from black and minority ethnic groups. There has been some success in recruiting therapeutic foster parents. The recent formalising of the pooled budget with PCT will give flexibility to explore creative ways of meeting placements for children with complex needs locally.

The ratio of black and minority ethnic children in need compared to the percentage in the local population remains high and the council recognises that it needs to ensure that children and young people from all groups in the community are treated fairly and have equal access to services. Procedures for referral, assessment and review are based on the Needs Assessment Framework and thus take into account the racial, religious and cultural background of the child and any disability.

Disabled children's services are not currently flexible enough to meet the needs of families and their carers. The short breaks service has recently been reviewed and the council recognises the need to develop more imaginative ways of involving disabled children in decisions about their care. Care Pathways are being explored for disabled children, with a series of supporting workshops for staff.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are good. The quality of early years provision is good or very good and supports children well in enabling them to meet the early learning goals. There has been a large expansion in the number of childminders and out-of-school childcare. The nurseries are located in areas of greatest need and provision for children with special educational needs is good. When inspected, a minority of sessional settings were judged to be inadequate; the council has recognised this issue and is prioritising support to these settings.

Standards overall in schools are above the national averages. Attainment at Key Stage 1 is in line with statistical neighbours but is lower than performance at the other key stages. The council is using link advisers from the Foundation Stage to support transition to Key Stage 1 to improve performance and is to implement a range of strategies and monitor their impact on raising standards. At Key Stage 2, performance is good in mathematics and, at Key Stage 3, in English and science. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C is above that nationally and in similar authorities; GCSE A*-G grades were in line with statistical neighbours. The proportion of looked-after children gaining one or more GCSEs is low, but in line with national figures. The attendance of these children is relatively good. Black and minority ethnic pupils represent six per cent of the population and their performance at GCSE is in line with the LEA average.

Levels of exclusion from school, both at primary and secondary stages, are relatively high. The council is aware of this and is seeking to reduce the figures by giving clearer

data to schools and encouraging them to take more corporate responsibility. There is a high proportion of pupils receiving alternative provision for more than one year and low levels of reintegration. Some of this cohort has chronic medical needs. A reintegration teacher and assistant have recently been appointed with a focus of speeding up and supporting reintegration.

The numbers of statements of special educational need are reducing and the majority are completed within expected timescales. There are a low number of the authority's schools in categories of concern and support for these schools is good. The advice and support for special schools is not as good as support to other schools. The authority recognises this shortcoming, and is negotiating with an external provider to commission this support.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are good. The rate of youth crime overall is below national averages and the youth offending team has achieved its targets in reducing burglary and re-offending rates. A youth crime prevention co-ordinator has been appointed to the team and a prevention strategy has been drafted. The council has a wide range of projects to combat re-offending but their full impact is not yet apparent. There is a low rate of re-offending generally but a high re-offending rate for certain minority groups. There is a relatively high rate of final warnings and convictions of looked after children. The authority has recognised the need to work more intensively with these groups and is intending to set targets for improvement.

The majority of children and young people are given sound support in managing changes in their lives. There has been an increase over the last two years in the proportion of looked after children who contributed their opinions at reviews. Transition of vulnerable groups has been identified appropriately as an area for improvement and an action plan has been drafted.

There are a number of projects, which are supporting vulnerable groups effectively. These include support for young carers and a 'Teenager to work' project which has been successful in engaging vulnerable young people in work placements.

The authority has established a number of processes to elicit the views of children and young people. Independent advocacy services are being used to good effect in helping children and young people, including disabled children, to express their views and any complaints. Young people are included on the Connexions board or involved in team planning and reviewing. The council are developing ways to use young people to gain the views of their peers, for example, in researching what stops participation in education, employment and training. This information will be used to inform the Children and Young Person's plan. Improving consultation on service design and delivery has been identified as a priority.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are adequate overall. Family support services are performing well and provide effective intervention and services for care leavers. However, there are too many care leavers supported in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation. The number of direct payments to carers of disabled children and 16/17 year old disabled young people is small.

A full-time strategy manager for 14-19 is in post. However, the learning and skills agenda tends to focus on 16-19 and adult learners. Overall, the quality of education provided for 16 to 19 year olds is adequate and the proportion of young people progressing to higher education or training is in line with national averages. Attainment at post-16 is in line with national and statistical neighbours. There is regular monitoring of black and minority ethnic children's performance post 16 and individual analysis is planned.

Co-operation between the youth service and Connexions has helped to increase the number of young people in education, employment or training but there is too little evidence gathered on the impact of strategies and too little focus on working with the local Learning and Skills Council to widen vocational options for the full range of young people. The council is starting to address this issue through the creation of two young apprenticeship schemes, and the provision of more NVQ qualifications as alternatives to GCSE awards. BTEC first diplomas are also being introduced. Future plans include a 14-19 vocational centre for the area.

The number of care leavers in education, training and employment has fallen to a very low level. Although this is a relatively small group the council acknowledges the need to improve Pathway Planning and audit the implementation of these plans. The council is intending to set up local indicators to track progress and has set an ambitious target to improve performance.

SUMMARY

| Strengths | Areas for improvement |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low teenage conception rates effective strategy targeting vulnerable groups • schools involvement in the healthy schools project and in sport • effective CAMHS strategy group • increased numbers of looked after children receiving regular health and dental checks. | <p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction in CAMHS service waiting lists • information on outcomes of CAMHS activity. |
| <p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • robust framework and procedures for safeguarding children • innovative practice and multi-agency project for children who abuse other children • numbers of looked after children, stability of placements and high proportion in foster care. | <p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring fair treatment and equal access to services for children and young people from all groups in the community • the range of placement choice for children and young people • increasing the numbers of children adopted. • The breadth and flexibility of services for children and young people with disabilities. |
| <p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing numbers of childcare providers • performance in specific subjects Key Stages 2 and 3 and value added between these stages, and the percentage of children achieving 5, A* - C grades • good attendance of looked after children • timely completion rates and reduction in new statements of SEN. | <p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the quality of sessional day care facilities • Key Stage 1 results. • the proportion of pupils excluded from schools and from special schools. • the proportion of children in alternative educational provision for more than a year and reintegration rates. • the attainment of looked after children, particularly at GCSE. |
| <p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initiatives to involve and support vulnerable young people • Youth Crime prevention and preventative projects • commissioning independent advocacy services to support children and young people to express their views and to make complaints. | <p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involvement of young people and parents in strategic planning processes • transition strategies for children with learning disabilities and SEN • re-offending rates of some minority groups. |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family support services and effective intervention and services for care leavers • 14-19 strategy manager in post. | <p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <p>Breadth of vocational options for young people aged 14 - 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of care leavers in education, employment and training • The accommodation capacity for care leavers • The number of direct payments for carers of disabled children and 16/17 year old disabled young people. |
|--|--|

Service management

Plans and priorities are being developed through joint working and a coordinated approach. The council and its partners have developed a Local Preventative Strategy with objectives matched to the 5 outcomes of Every Child Matters and the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership's (CYPSP) vision. The Local Strategic Partnership has a lead group to deliver on each priority and multi-agency work on planning and delivering strategic direction. The Change for Children steering group oversees the measured implementation of the Children Act. The CYPSP framework ensures partnership working is developed and that consultation is coordinated and effective. Young people have contributed their views about the local priorities for Children Act implementation. The participation-working group is planning to consult with groups representing those identified in the priorities in early autumn. Four cluster groups have been designated for integrated service delivery. This has enabled Health personnel to undertake a more active role and promote effective joint working.

There is a clear corporate commitment to children's services. The management teams in both social services and education are strong, but they are small and capacity issues have been raised in the both the auditors report and the recent CSCI inspection. This is particularly important in a time of change. The council have brought forward their plans to recruit a Director of Children's services to September 2005. Performance management is well embedded, although target setting and measurement of outcomes is less well developed.

There are significant financial pressures on the council. However, the expenditure on family support services has increased with the focus on preventative work. The council has experienced recruitment difficulties, particularly with social work staff and there has been a high turnover of staff working directly with children. A comprehensive analysis of the workforce and the skills required in the children and family teams has been undertaken, resulting in the development of a new childcare team structure, which is likely to alleviate some of the recruitment difficulties. The impact of this on outcomes for children will be audited. The authority has good capacity to improve further.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Action is taken to promote children and young people's mental health:

- CAMHS development and outcomes.

Staying safe

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities live in safe environments and are protected from abuse and exploitation:

- development of care pathways for disabled children.

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

- development of a wider range of placement options.

Enjoying and achieving

Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and to achieve highly:

- levels of exclusion, particularly of statemented pupils
- proportion of pupils educated in alternative provision and re-integration levels.

Making a positive contribution

Children and young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups are supported in managing changes and responding to challenges in their lives:

- implementation of transition strategies for children with learning disabilities and SEN.

Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting the community:

- increasing capacity and coordination in participation work.

Achieving economic well-being

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

- work with the local Learning and Skills Council to widen vocational options for the full range of young people
- impact of current strategies.

Final judgements

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

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS

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

APA final judgements 2005: Bath and North East Somerset 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. | 3 |
| 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 |

1

| 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 |