

9 December 2009

Mrs Edna Sutton
Director for Children, Young People and Families
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
PO Box 609
Barnsley
South Yorkshire
S70 9FH

Dear Mrs Sutton

Children's services annual rating

Ofsted guidance published in May 2009 explained that the annual rating would derive from a new performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the council has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant *Every Child Matters* indicators in the new National Indicator Set (NIS).

In considering the evidence in the profile to determine the children's services rating for 2009 it has become clear that the continuing gaps in the data are significant, particularly those relating to aspects of social care and services for Looked After Children. Ofsted has decided therefore to use 2009 as a transitional year easing into the full application of the new system in 2010. As a consequence, although the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's rating, we have interpreted the performance bands with flexibility and exercised professional judgement with caution.

The annual rating derives from a four point scale:

4	Performs excellently	An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
3	Performs well	An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements
2	Performs adequately	An organisation that meets only minimum requirements
1	Performs poorly	An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements

Within each level there will be differing standards of provision. For example, a rating of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, a rating of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects.

Children's services rating 2009

Children's services rating	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council perform well.

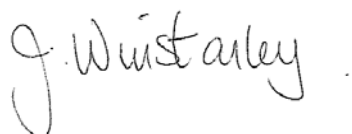
The overall effectiveness of the large majority of inspected and regulated services and settings is good or better. Performance in nursery schools, school sixth forms, special schools and the pupil referral unit is above that found in similar areas and nationally. However, primary and secondary schools do not perform as well and are below comparators. Childcare provision is satisfactory but not as good as that found nationally. Judgements for staying safe and enjoying and achieving in inspected services are good or better in most cases.

Good performance is seen in services and settings to support children and young people whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, including in special schools and the pupil referral unit. The local authority's adoption service and the private fostering arrangements both perform well, as do children's homes. The local authority fostering agency is satisfactory. Two serious case reviews have been carried out of which one was conducted inadequately and one adequately.

Performance against the majority of national indicators is at least in line with similar areas and national figures. For staying safe this is true for the very large majority of indicators. However, figures for enjoying and achieving are significantly lower with only just over half at least in line with national comparators and just under half in line with similar areas. There are some particular weaknesses in health, in outcomes for young offenders and in educational outcomes at all ages. However, the inequality gap is reducing for the youngest pupils who are in the Early Years Foundation Stage and is good for pupils with special educational needs at the age of 16.

The children's services rating is provided for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The rating of local authority children's services will contribute significantly to the managing performance theme of each local authority's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment and therefore to the score for each local authority overall.

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'.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA