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9 December 2010

Mr Robert McCulloch-Graham
Director of Children's Services
London Borough of Barnet
Building 4, North London Business Park
Oakleigh Road South, New Southgate
London, N11 1NP

Dear Mr McCulloch-Graham

Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment 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, an assessment of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2009, while the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

London Borough of Barnet children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs excellently (4)
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Children's services in the London Borough of Barnet perform excellently. This is an improvement from 2009, when services performed well.

The very large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better and very little are inadequate. The support provided to help children and young people learn and enjoy what they do is consistently strong. The overall quality of childminder and childcare settings has improved and is now good. Nurseries and early years education in primary schools are very strong. A very large majority of primary and secondary schools are good or better, none are inadequate and nine of the 20 secondary schools are outstanding. Three out of the four special schools are outstanding and all the pupil referral units are good. The borough is served by a good general further education college and an outstanding sixth form college. A very large majority of school sixth forms are good or better. Local authority fostering and adoption agencies are good. One children's home is good and one is satisfactory. The children's home managed by the private and voluntary sector is good, as is one fostering and adoption agency and the other is satisfactory.

The most recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found significant strengths and some areas for development but no areas for priority action.

National performance measures show a very large majority of outcomes to be in line with or better than elsewhere and similarly for indicators of educational attainment. Far fewer statements of children's special educational needs than average, however, are completed on time. Children and young people do well in national tests and very well in the qualifications they gain by the age of 19. Those from families with low incomes do better than elsewhere and, at 11 and 19 years, are catching up with their peers in the borough. Numbers of 16- to 18-year-olds who are not in education, work or training are low and reducing. Children and young people with special educational needs do well and achievement gaps between them and their peers are narrowing for 11-year-olds.

Key areas for further improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Improve the timely completion of statements of special educational needs.

Outcomes for children and young people

Most inspected services are good or better at helping children and young people live healthy lives. Early years and childcare settings are not as effective but have improved since the last assessment. Average numbers of children who are too overweight; there has been some recent reduction for 11-year-olds but wide-ranging

actions have not yet resulted in sustained improvement. Children and young people's participation in physical education and sport continues to be lower than average, although improving slowly. Services to help children and young people if they are feeling troubled are accessible in local communities and prompt in responding to needs. Although initiatives are increasingly targeted to vulnerable groups who are most at risk, the teenage pregnancy rate is not reducing quickly enough.

Arrangements to help children and young people stay safe are consistently good across different settings and services other than childminders who are not as effective. The most recent unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found strengths in the way the local authority minimises risk and promotes good outcomes for children. Responses to reported concerns about domestic violence are prompt and effective. Actions to keep children and young people safe within their communities are very effective. The number of children killed or seriously injured in road accidents have continued to fall and the number admitted to hospital as a result of injuries continue to be much lower than the average nationally. Far fewer children report being bullied than elsewhere.

Schools of all types, colleges, childminders and childcarers are mostly very effective in helping children and young people learn. Very young children do well during their early years and continue to make good progress in primary schools. They consistently do better in national tests for 11-year-olds than in similar areas and standards are much higher than those achieved nationally. This good progress continues in secondary schools. Standards achieved by 16-year-olds are consistently higher than for similar areas and are well above the national rate and improving. Children and young people from families with low incomes also consistently do better than elsewhere at the ages of 11 and 16. The gap between these children and their peers in the borough is narrowing at the age of 11, but widened last year for 16-year-olds, having previously narrowed steadily. Children and young people with special educational needs consistently do better than in other areas. Assessments of children's special educational needs are not always completed promptly. Behaviour in secondary schools is of a high standard and numbers of pupils who are persistently absent are much lower than found nationally and reducing.

Schools, colleges and services are very good at helping children and young people contribute to the community and in involving them in decisions which affect them. The borough has well-established arrangements for involving them in developing services. Children and young people's participation in organised activities in their local communities is broadly average. Significantly, fewer than average offend although recent data show re-offending rates have increased. Approximately three-quarters of young offenders are employed or in education or training, which is lower than elsewhere. Action has, however, been taken to improve services for these young people and nearly all have suitable places to live.

Institutions and services support children and young people well in preparing them for working life. Participation of young people in education and training at the age of 17 is much higher than the national average. The number of 16- to 18-year-olds who are not in education, work or training is low and has fallen much faster than for the

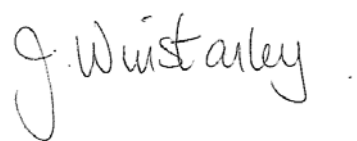
country overall. Young people do very well at the age of 19 and those from families with low incomes also do much better than the same group elsewhere and are catching up with their peers in the borough. More young people leaving care now find work, continue in education or undertake training, although numbers remain lower than average.

Prospects for improvement

Outcomes are improving in most areas and the Children and Young People's Plan sets out clear priorities for further development. Data are used well to assess progress and for setting appropriate and achievable targets for further improvement. There are wide-ranging initiatives to improve health outcomes. The local authority is committed to improving outcomes for groups whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Support provided to families and to children and young people who are at most risk of not achieving their potential is having the desired impact. Those from families with low incomes and those with special educational needs do better than elsewhere in their learning. Good use is made of surveys and discussions with different communities to identify needs and to involve children, young people and their parents in clarifying priorities. The unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found strong leadership, social workers with manageable caseloads and good staff morale. However, while steps have been taken to address the variable quality of assessments, progress has been limited in respect of demonstrable improvement and the recording and completion of assessments is not timely. The local authority is mindful of the need to spend wisely and is careful to identify which activities have the most impact on improving outcomes.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

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, Children's Services Assessment