



Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Ms Stansfield

**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF LONDON BOROUGH OF BARNET
EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005**

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 27 June 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. There is increasing evidence of stronger multi-agency and partnership working. Planning is good and targets are realistic. Some work has been undertaken to analyse need and there is further work ongoing. The Self assessment shows a good understanding of both strengths and weaknesses. The Council's plans for future development are clear.

There is evidence of consultation with children and young people to make improvements. The Self-assessment needs to provide more evidence of how this consultation has resulted in changes to service development or design.

The council's work in relation to the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy is showing a greater commitment to joint delivery and it is expected that this will be reflected in improved outcomes. There is a continued need to focus on reducing the levels of teenage pregnancy and to increase support to young pregnant women.

Good progress is being made in the development of CAHMS services. A single point of entry referral system has been established since April 2005. This should promote a more effective response. The number of full-time equivalent posts has increased from 6 in 2003/04 to 9 full time equivalent posts.

The Inspection of Fostering Services in January 2005 found that children and young people being looked after in foster care settings, received health care that met their physical, emotional and social development.

A large number of schools are currently following the Healthy Schools Scheme. Expenditure on school meals is above the national average and meals meet the National Nutritional Standards. There is variability in schools offering the recommended two hour a week time allocation for sport. In relation to sexual health services, there has been a focus on young people in greatest need, and a number of sexual health projects established in local areas where this has been identified as a problem.

Only half of all looked after children had appropriate health checks. This is a fall from 73.5% in 2003/04, when it was identified as an area for improvement. The Council are aware that the current level of performance records the position in the first six months of the year. It states that the fall in performance is the result of workforce vacancies and that this issue has been resolved. The number of looked after children with appropriate health checks is expected to improve. The Council has set a target of 79% for 2005/06. This is realistic but will still be below Barnet's comparator group.

There is a need for the Council to develop further the range of evidence gathering activities they undertake in this area and ensure robust evaluations are made to determine their impact on children and young people.

Staying safe

The Inspection of Children's Services in July 2004 recognised the considerable improvements made in the years following the last inspection carried out in 2001. It highlighted the shared vision and a clear commitment across all agencies and at all levels of the service to improve services for children.

The delivery of services to children and families in the past year continues to reflect that judgement. There is evidence that practice is improving and planning and joint working are strengths.

Barnet has undergone major structural and cultural change and has placed itself in a strong position to meet the requirements of Every Child Matters. The effectiveness of leadership has been evidenced by the way these changes have been managed.

There is evidence of significant multi-agency working to ensure that children are safe. There is effective partnership working and planning is very strong. There are effective arrangements in place to manage child protection. Significant work has taken place across the council and with partners to ensure that there are good policies and procedures. There are systems in place to monitor how effective arrangements are and the role of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) is clear. The LSCB has been

established to consider the broader agenda of safeguarding and the promotion of welfare, and not child protection matters only.

All child cases on the Child Protection Register (CPR) have been allocated to a qualified social worker. The proportion of children on the Child Protection Register who were reviewed within timescales has fallen significantly and is an area for attention. The length of time that children and young people remain on the CPR has fallen, and only 3.9% of children have been on the register for two years or more. Although the proportion of children on the register, who have previously been registered, increased from 5.2% to 15.6%, it remains an area of good performance.

Children looked after have been in more stable placements. There has been a good reduction in the proportion of children looked after with three or more placement moves in a year and an improvement in their long term stability. There has been a fall in the number of repeat referrals. There has also been a fall in the proportion of looked after children who have a named social worker who is qualified. The Council made an investment in the development of a trainee social work scheme and are clear that not all looked after children will be allocated to a qualified social worker. The Council state that where children are allocated to unqualified workers, then arrangements are in place to ensure that there is appropriate oversight of the case by a qualified worker.

There has been a slight improvement in the number of initial assessments carried out within timescales and much better improvement in the number of comprehensive assessments carried out within timescales. However, despite these improvements, levels remain below those of comparable authorities and are an area for improvement.

All pupils with statements of special education, who are looked after, are monitored by the education service, including children placed out of the borough. All children in residential settings are visited at least once a year by education officers. The Pupil Placement Panel monitors children, including vulnerable (incorporates looked after) children missing their education. The integration of Connexions with the Youth Service has increased the Council's capacity to track children and young people, within a multi-agency approach.

The Council has reviewed recruitment procedures in the light of the Bichard recommendations. It has also reviewed its procedures following the recommendations made by the inspection of Children's Services in 2004.

In summary, the Council has driven the safeguarding agenda effectively. There is evidence of systems in place supporting the safety of children and young people. There is good collaboration across council departments and between agencies.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are good. This judgement signifies significant improvement since 2003 when the local education authority was judged to be unsatisfactory. The quality of provision in nursery education is better than the national picture with significantly higher standards of teaching and good outcomes for children in the area of communication, language and literacy. Results in reading and writing at the end of Key Stage 1 are above the national average but do not always compare as favourably against the results in similar authorities. Results in mathematics are close to the national average but have been consistently lower than those found in similar authorities since 1999.

Standards at Key Stage 2 are above those found nationally and in similar authorities. Pupils make above average progress compared to their achievements at Key Stage 1. This is a major strength. Pupils make generally average improvement as they progress through Key Stage 3. For many children this progress is sustained as they achieve above average results at GCSE. The percentage of pupils achieving 5 A*-C grades at GCSE is close to those found in similar authorities and well above the national average. The number of children achieving no GCSE pass, however, is significantly higher than those found in similar areas although the gap has been closing in recent years. The concerted efforts of the council in supporting pupils' achievement in the Excellence Cluster is bearing fruit as 55% of students progress to higher education. The authority is rightly concerned about the achievement of Black African and Black Caribbean pupils. These groups are significantly more likely to underachieve and be permanently excluded than others. This picture is striking when compared against the low exclusion rates generally found in the area for pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4.

Looked after children generally achieve well with a 12 percent increase in those gaining 5 or more GCSE's at grade A* -C or a GNVQ. These children are clearly benefiting from the consistent approach to multi-agency work developed in the authority. The percentage of care leavers gaining at least 1 A*-G fell from 54.8% to 47.4% and the proportion leaving care with 5 or more GCSE A* -C was 18.4%, an improvement on previous years and higher than the national average.

Attendance rates continue to improve at secondary schools where they are benefiting from a clear action plan that is being rigorously implemented and monitored. Authorised absences are below the national average and those found in similar areas. Unauthorised absences are inline with national and statistical neighbours. The picture for primary schools is rather mixed. Authorised absence is inline with national averages and those found in similar areas but unauthorised absence has been above the national average and the levels found in similar areas in each of the last 4 years.

The authority is aware that although several schools are among the most successful and popular in the country there are a few underperforming with too much variability in the quality of learning. Since 1993 the authority has had a high number of schools causing concern. The last local education authority inspection highlighted this area as an important weakness. Strong and energetic management has ensured that action taken to support weaker schools has been judged either satisfactory or good with evidence of effective brokering of external support for schools in greatest need. The number of schools causing concern has reduced dramatically in recent years and is now close to the national average.

The Connexions and Youth services have been brought together under single management in recent years. As a result there has been an increasing involvement by young people, particularly those with special educational needs and those that are looked after. Links with external agencies including arts groups have been developed and appear to be increasing participation.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are good. The rate of youth offending is below the levels found in similar areas and those nationally. Levels of re-offending have been reduced and most encouragingly the re-offending rate of those on community penalties with whom the Youth Offending team intervenes directly is lower than those on first tier penalties who are likely to be at a lower level of offending. The proportion of looked after children receiving final warnings, reprimands and convictions rose from 1.3% in 2003/04 to 2.1%. However, this is still lower than comparable authorities.

The vast majority of children and young people are given good support in managing their own lives. 56.4% of looked after children contributed their opinions at reviews. During the annual review of statements for those with special educational needs the views of children and young people were included in all reviews. The percentage of statements made for the first time which were prepared within 18 weeks was more than double those achieved by statistical neighbours and was better than the national average. The authority has promoted the development of School Councils and these have now been established in all secondary schools. Evidence gathered from recent school inspections suggests that in most schools the development of pupil's personal, social, moral and cultural awareness is often good.

Individual services for children and young people often ask for their views in order to help improve the provision that is offered. It is unclear how this evidence is evaluated centrally to ensure that the authority is aware of the views expressed. It is also unclear how the views of children and young people influence policy or how elected members take account of them. The authority has no formal procedure for implementing such a survey.

The restructuring of the Children and Families Division has increased the focus on outcomes, and the establishment of 'Listening to Children' has potential to further the involvement of children and young people in service development.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are adequate overall. The main weakness is the stubborn nature of the percentage of young people who do not achieve a formal qualification when they leave school.

The results achieved by many young people at GCSE are good and this encourages many to continue with their education after the age of 16. The number of young people, including those leaving care, not in education, training or employment is low. The authority is aware of the need to extend the range of courses available for young people particularly as they progress through Key Stage 4 and beyond. With only 4 providers of such courses the range is rather limited but the authority has clear ambitions to work with partners to improve the provision. The authority has begun to tackle the perception held by some schools and parents that vocational courses are just for the disaffected or lower achieving. The Excellence Cluster is enabling more young people to progress on to higher education than before.

The quality of teaching provided in post 16 settings is at least good and often very good resulting in high standards of attainment. No sixth forms have been judged to be inadequate.

An important weakness in this area continues to be the poor performance of some young people in gaining a formal qualification at the age of 16. This has been a problem for some years and although the gap is narrowing when compared to the national average it requires continuing concerted efforts by all partners to achieve parity with statistical neighbours.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools working closely with Barnet PCT with high levels of satisfaction • single access point for CAMHS. 	<p><i>Being healthy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all looked after children require health checks and health planning.

<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensuring children and young people are safe multi-agency partnerships for ensuring secure safeguarding child protection. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduce the timescales for completion of initial and comprehensive assessments improve the proportion of children on the Child Protection Register who are reviewed within timescales.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> standards achieved by pupils at Key Stage 2 and those gaining 5 or more A*-C GCSE passes the educational outcomes for many looked after children support for schools causing concern. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> achievement in reading and writing at Key Stage 1 the number of young people leaving school with no formal qualification continuing commitment to eradicating the number of schools causing concern.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the rate of Youth offending the involvement of looked after children and those with special educational needs in reviewing their needs. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> no issues.
<p><i>Achieving economic wellbeing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> achievement for many pupils at GCSE and at post 16 the high number of young people, including recent care leavers, in education, training and employment the positive impact of the Excellence Cluster in increasing the number of young people involved in higher education. 	<p><i>Achieving economic wellbeing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pupils leaving school at 16 with no formal qualifications the range of courses available to pupils aged 16+.

Service management

The authority has benefited from forceful and successful leadership in recent years. Early attempts to involve relevant partners have been good. The authorities' self assessment is accurate and honest and provides a secure basis for the formulation of a Children and Young People's Plan. Improvement in social care provision has been remarkable and resulted in much improved outcomes and some innovative practice. There is a clear vision and a commitment across all agencies and at all levels of the service to improve outcomes for children. Planning and the management of resources in children and families are very strong. There is evidence that social care practice is improving and planning and joint work remains strong.

The education service has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of its schools and has made strong improvement since its disappointing inspection in 2003. The underachievement and weak leadership in a small but significant number of schools has in many cases been addressed and early results are positive resulting in fewer schools in a formal category. The work of the service in supporting schools causing concern has on the whole been effective. There remain a small number of schools that are proving difficult to improve and this is exaggerating the range of provision between the very best school and the weakest.

The authority has developed innovative strategies to tackle the problems it faces in recruiting sufficient social workers. It continues to find it difficult to recruit occupational therapists and residential care workers. Although the turnover of staff in Barnet schools is high when compared to its statistical neighbours and the national average it manages to ensure that no unfilled vacancies remain for any length of time.

The council has good capacity to improve further.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Looked after children's health needs are addressed:

- looked after children receive health checks and health planning.

Staying safe

The incidence of child abuse and neglect are minimised:

- the review of children on the Child Protection Register
- the timescales for completion of initial and comprehensive assessments.

Enjoying and achieving

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

- standards achieved by pupils at Key Stage 1 in reading and writing
- effectiveness of the support provided by the authority for schools causing concern
- progress made by pupils achieving no formal qualifications when they leave school.

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:

- the range of courses available locally to pupils aged 16 years and above.

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
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Commission for Social Care Inspection

APA final judgements 2005: London Borough of Barnet

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	2
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 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