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8 November 2011

Ms Judith Harwood  
Executive Director for Children, Young People and Families  
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council  
Directorate for Children, Young People and Families  
PO Box 609  
Barnsley  
South Yorkshire S70 9FH

Dear Ms Harwood

## Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in April 2011 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services 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 other published data.

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of inspection outcomes including the arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against similar authorities and/or 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 2010, 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.

## Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs adequately (2)
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Children's services in Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council perform adequately as they did in 2010. The large majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better and help children and young people learn, with the very large majority of provision helping them to stay safe. There have been some improvements made in early years and childcare provision, post-16 settings and the local authority fostering agency. However, the quality of secondary schools is still too low, as are attainment levels, particularly at the age of 16 and by the age of 19.

A recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection found one area of significant strength and no areas for priority action. It recognised that almost all the areas identified for development at the last inspection in May 2010 have been fully addressed.

### Strengths

- The large majority of early years and childcare provision is good or better and there is now no inadequate provision. The proportion of good or better providers has increased well over the last year.
- For children under five, the very large majority of provision in nursery and primary schools is good or better. Achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has continued to improve and is in line with the average for similar areas and nationally. In addition, the gap in achievement between children from low-income families and their peers has narrowed.
- The proportion of good or better primary schools has increased since last year and the large majority are good or better. Key Stage 2 results, although below those of similar areas and the national average, rose steadily between 2007 and 2010. Provisional results for 2011 show significant improvement, bringing the local authority within one percentage point of the national average. This was an area for development at the time of the last assessment.
- The large majority of post-16 provision is good or better and the further education college has improved and is now outstanding.
- As last year, specialist provision, including both local authority special schools and the pupil referral unit, is good. A recent inspection of the local fostering agency found that it had effectively addressed issues from the previous inspection and judged it to be good, as is the local adoption agency. One of the local authority's children's homes is good and the other is outstanding. Nine of the 10 private and voluntary sector children's

homes are at least good and three are outstanding. The very large majority of the provision Barnsley commissions in children's homes elsewhere is also at least good.

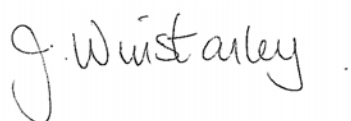
- A recent inspection of the youth offending service identified good performance in all the key areas inspected.

### **Areas for further improvement**

- Improving the quality of secondary schools remains a key area for development. The local authority recognises this as its top priority. Much change has taken place or is due to happen over the next few months to establish Advanced Learning Centres. However, three of the 12 local authority schools are in an Ofsted category of concern and only three schools inspected have been judged to be good. Ofsted monitoring visits to schools note improvements in behaviour and report that good and effective support from the local authority is having a positive impact on improving the quality of provision. This has yet to be translated into improved inspection outcomes for all secondary schools, with the overall percentage that are good or better remaining very low.
- There has been slow but steady improvement in the proportion of 16-year-olds gaining five GCSEs at A\* to C including English and mathematics but this remains well below that found in similar areas and nationally. Provisional data for 2011 indicate further improvement.
- Although making sustained improvement, the proportion of young people achieving level 2 and 3 qualifications by the age of 19 remains below similar areas and the national average. The proportion of those from low-income families gaining level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 is also below the national average, and the gap in achievement between this group and all young people in Barnsley is not reducing.

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, flowing style.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment