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Mr Ashley Ayre  
Strategic Director, Children's Services  
Bath and North East Somerset Council  
P.O. Box 25  
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Dear Mr Ayre

## 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.

## Bath and North East Somerset Council children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Bath and North East Somerset Council perform well. In 2010 services were judged to be performing excellently, but concerns arising from the most recent inspection of children's social care contact, referral and assessment arrangements that took place in February 2011 are significant and are pivotal to this year's children's services assessment.

The overall effectiveness of the very large majority of all types of settings and institutions is good or better and almost all provision is good at helping children and young people to stay safe, enjoy their learning and achieve well. A number of secondary schools have become academies and most of these were judged to be outstanding schools at their last inspection. These schools have been taken into account in this assessment.

### Strengths

- The overall effectiveness of settings and institutions inspected and regulated by Ofsted continues to be very good and improving. The overall quality of provision is better than found in similar areas or nationally for almost all types of settings. This includes registered day-care provision, primary schools and secondary schools. There is very little inadequate provision of any kind. Only one primary school is currently in an Ofsted category of concern and the local authority provides well-targeted support to aid improvement.
- Most specialist provision for children and young people is good or outstanding. Two of the three special schools are at least good and one is satisfactory. The recently inspected residential special school is judged to be outstanding in all aspects of care for young people living in its boarding house. The local authority's adoption agency is good and the fostering agency is outstanding, as they were last year. The local authority has no children's homes of its own. The quality of the children's homes it currently uses is at least good.
- When set alongside the appropriate comparators, performance in Bath and North East Somerset is as good as, or better than, that found elsewhere for almost all published indicators, including those for children and young people's educational attainment and progress. Provisional test results for 11-year-olds are slightly lower than in 2010, but remain higher than the national average.
- Almost all secondary provision is good or outstanding. In 2010 a higher proportion of 16-year-olds achieved five good GCSEs, including English and mathematics, than in similar areas and results were above the

national average. Results have improved at a faster pace than elsewhere over the last four years.

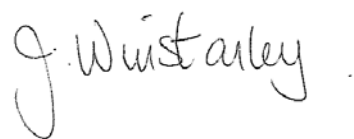
- The proportion of young people that gain level 2 and level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 is better than that found in similar areas and nationally. The overall quality of secondary school sixth forms is very good.

### **Areas for further improvement**

- The inspection of children's social care contact, referral and assessment arrangements that took place in January 2011 identified two areas of strength, including the wide range of effective integrated preventative services, and many areas of satisfactory practice that meet requirements. There are six areas for development, some of which are significant. These include issues about assessments, as the quality of analysis is variable and does not consistently reflect sufficient focus on key risk and protective factors. In addition, assessments do not consistently address equality and diversity issues and although they do usually reflect children's wishes and feelings, these views then fail to sufficiently influence individual case plans. There is also a lack of evidence regarding managerial comment on the quality of practice. While the areas for development identified at the previous inspection in May 2010 are being addressed and some progress had been made in the period between inspections, the majority of measures taken have yet to demonstrate sufficient and sustained impact.
- The achievement of five-year-olds is broadly in line with similar area and national averages. However, a slightly lower proportion achieved a good level of development in 2010 when compared with the previous year and the pace of improvement over the last four years has been faster elsewhere. The proportion of children from low-income families who achieved a good level of development also fell and performance is not as good as that found elsewhere. The achievement gap between the children from low-income families and their peers in the local authority has increased since 2007 and is now wider than in similar areas and nationally.

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 cursive script that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment