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Dr Krutika Pau
Director of Children and Families
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Dear Dr Pau

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.

London Borough of Brent children's services assessment 2011

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in the London borough of Brent perform well. This performance has been sustained from 2010 to 2011. The majority of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better and few are inadequate. The large majority of provision helps children and young people to stay safe and the majority supports their learning well. Educational attainment that is mostly average continues to improve, most key vulnerable groups do well and gaps are closing. Areas of strength remain largely the same as last year and progress has been made in the key areas for further development. As found elsewhere, changes to secondary provision are taking place and more schools have become academies. Previous inspection judgements for these schools have been taken into account in the assessment.

In 2010, Ofsted's annual unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements for children in need and children who may be in need of protection identified three strengths, many satisfactory aspects of practice and some areas for development, including one from 2009 that has been implemented in part. There were no areas for priority action. In October 2011, a full inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services judged the overall effectiveness of both as adequate. Safeguarding outcomes are adequate and almost all outcomes for looked after children are at least adequate. However, health services for this group are inadequate.

Strengths

- The large majority of provision for children under five in nursery and primary schools remains good or better, although more is now only satisfactory.
- In primary schools, average standards rose significantly in 2010 and show a faster rate of improvement than nationally at the age of 11. In 2011, provisional results for 11-year-olds are below those for 2010 but show improvement over the last five years.
- Almost all secondary schools and their sixth forms remain good or better. One outstanding secondary school has become an academy. Standards of behaviour are high and poor attendance by some young people is improving. At the age of 16, standards continue to rise steadily. In 2010, the proportion of young people gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, was in line with the national average and above that found in similar areas. At 61%, provisional results for 2011 show further good improvement. The attainment of 16-year-olds from low-income families is well above average and the gap with their peers in Brent has closed well. Sixteen-year-olds with special educational needs show attainment above the national average and broadly in line

with similar areas, although the gap with their peers in Brent shows little sign of closing. Attainment for minority ethnic groups at the age of 16 ranges from below to above average, although most gaps are closing. Looked after children do as well as their peers elsewhere.

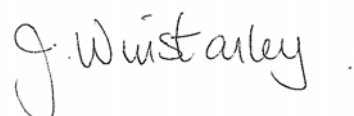
- After the age of 16, increasing numbers of young people, including care leavers, are in education, work or training. Average and increasing numbers of 19-year-olds gaining higher level and level 2 qualifications include a high proportion of young people from low-income families and achievement gaps have closed well.
- The large majority of specialist provision in special schools and pupil referral units is good or better.
- For looked after children, all services for fostering and adoption remain good. Children's homes show significant improvement, addressing a key area for development in 2010. The majority remain good or better and none are now inadequate. Of the services commissioned by the local authority, the large majority of providers are good or better, including children's homes.

Areas for further improvement

- The majority of provision for early years and childcare is now good or better and shows some improvement since last year. However, over 40% of childminders and childcare, and two of three children's centres inspected are only satisfactory.
- The proportion of five-year-olds reaching a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is below average but shows a faster rate of improvement than nationally over the last four years. In addition, data for 2011 show significant improvement. Although achievement for children from low-income families is also below average, the smaller than average gap with others of the same age in Brent closed slightly in 2010. This was a key area for improvement last year.
- Despite the majority of primary schools being good or better, just over 40% are only satisfactory and so performance is below that found elsewhere. Since 2010, one primary school no longer requires special measures but one remains in this category and another still needs improving. Both are making satisfactory progress, with strong support from the local authority.

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