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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Ms Archer

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment (APA) process for your local 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.

Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded¹
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 overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	3
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3

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Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Excellent / outstanding
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate

Leeds City Council's contribution to the improvement of outcomes for children and young people in the city is good. The council has continued to make improvements in children's services, involving them in consultation processes to aid planning. Improvements have also been reflected in the attainments of many young people. The council has engaged its partners well, and this is reflected in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). The plan identifies a clear set of objectives supported by action plans, which allocate responsibilities and set out clear measures of success. It recognises the gaps and shortfalls that the council and its partners need to address in order to achieve better outcomes for children and young people. Each outcome area is led by a multi-agency board and under each of these, measures have been set out that reflect the priorities identified through their own performance management and through the discussions with the Department for Education and Skills and CSCI.

The council has established some interim structures that allow for the continuity of service provision, but is considering ways that allow the council to develop a strategic and commissioning unit to work with both its internal and external partners. This is a bold approach that has been modelled on the successful arrangement with Education Leeds.

In 2005, the council was assessed as providing good social care services for children and young people and was judged as having a good capacity to improve. The 2006 assessment confirms that Leeds council now provides good education and continues to provide good social care support for children and families.

Being healthy

The council makes a good contribution toward improving the health of children and young people in Leeds. The CYPP for Leeds identifies both priorities and measures to demonstrate whether there has been improvement in this outcome area. The strengths of the plan are the multi-agency agreement to the tasks set out, and evidence that children and young people have contributed to the plan. There are joint commissioning arrangements in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and packages and placements for children with complex needs and/or disabilities.

There are a number of strategies in place which promote community based health services through schools and children's centres. These focus on several themes: childhood obesity; sexual health; substance misuse – including smoking, mental and emotional health; and maternal and infant health. The council also recognises that people's socio-economic status has a powerful impact on health outcomes reflected in infant mortality and dental health figures.

School inspection judgements show that health awareness is promoted well by encouraging healthy eating and ensuring regular access to sport and exercise. A higher than average number of schools are working towards the healthy schools standard, and the council is well on its way to exceeding the national target of 30% of its schools achieving the healthy school standard by December 2006.

The incidence of teenage pregnancy in 2004 saw a significant increase following previous year-on-year reductions. In response, the council completed a gap analysis to ascertain the factors that had contributed to the reductions and has now re-aligned its approach to sexual health in general.

There is a lower proportion of young offenders receiving substance misuse assessment and interventions than from other councils. As a consequence, the council's youth offending team (YOT) has re-commissioned the service with another provider and is confident that young offenders will now be assessed and offered treatment promptly. Both these examples demonstrate a council and health service community that is responsive to the emerging needs of young people.

There were two areas identified in the 2005 performance assessment: referrals of young offenders to mental health services; and ensuring the health and dental health needs of looked after children were being met. There has been at least adequate, and in some cases demonstrable, progress in both areas.

Staying safe

This year's assessment identifies several areas that need to be addressed, and therefore the council's contribution to improvement in staying safe is judged adequate.

Child protection indicators and stability of placements for looked after children demonstrate good performance and outcomes. All looked after children and those on the register have a named social worker. The council continues to ensure that the vast majority of children over the age of 14 with disabilities, have transition plans to support their move from children's services to adult services. The council's performance management system is sound. The council has a robust case file audit system that is used to assess the quality of the work being undertaken by social workers. The system has been in place for nearly two years and, while in the early stages there was some resistance amongst staff, both this and the electronic social care record system are now well established. Both managers and social workers feel it has improved the quality of the work and of case recording.

The council's services are equally accessible to all sections of the community including people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. In response to the increasing demands of unaccompanied and asylum seeking children, the council established a dedicated and innovative team linked with the police and immigration services.

Section 5 inspections have judged that, of the schools inspected in Leeds, over two thirds were good or better in ensuring the safety of pupils.

There are some social care issues, which although actions have been taken, have yet to take full effect. The assessment of the impact of policies on promoting race equality, begun last year, has not been fully completed; the timeliness of reviews for looked after children needs to be addressed; and the completion of core assessments within prescribed timescales improved.

Work is more advanced in other areas. The marginal fall in the number of adoptions of looked after children made last year has been addressed by establishing dedicated teams to recruit and support adoption parents, while the recent review of the provision for residential care for children has a number of innovative features including private finance initiatives. However, there are several residential care homes for children that do not fully meet the national minimum standards in some outcome areas.

Enjoying and achieving

The council's contribution to improving the outcomes in this area is good overall.

Early years provision remains a strength, both in the quality of its outcomes for children and the range of provision. Children's centres across the authority have achieved a beacon award for their quality. Actions imposed on child minders when they first register are higher than normal. However, the level of support given by the council services and additional training for providers and rigorous quality assurance measures result in subsequent inspection judgements for childcare exceeding national averages, and those for funded provision (age 3 and above) being in line with expected levels.

Attainment across Key Stages 1 to 4 remains variable. Standards at Key Stages 1 and 2 are broadly satisfactory but those at Key Stages 3 and 4 are below national averages. However, there has been encouraging improvement in attainment since last year in both stages. Since the 2004 Ofsted report, the number of schools being placed in a category of concern has reduced and currently there is no school in special measures. The authority is doing significantly better than both similar authorities and nationally in preventing schools being placed in a category.

The authority has continued to address the issue of raising attendance, with some innovative initiatives aimed at reducing truancy. Attendance in primary schools is in line with similar authorities but the picture is less assured in secondary schools and for looked after children. Despite attendance targets being met over the last three years, unauthorised absence remains an area for improvement. Nevertheless, the authority has a planned programme of measures to tackle the issue.

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Pupils make good or outstanding progress in over half the schools inspected and there is no unsatisfactory provision. The processing of statements has become more efficient and is now comparable to national timescales. The attainment of looked after children has shown improvement with 14% gaining 5 or more GCSE A* to C grades while there was an increase from 18% to 23% for those pupils receiving free school meals.

Overall, pupils enjoy their education: inspection findings show that in 20 of the 30 schools, pupils' level of enjoyment was rated good or outstanding, and in the remainder it was satisfactory.

The authority has clearly recognised where there are weaknesses, acted on recommendations from last year with some success, and continues to promote innovative ideas to secure further improvement.

Making a positive contribution

The council makes a good contribution to the improvement of outcomes for children and young people in this area.

Children and young people make a positive contribution to the work of the council through an effective system of consultation. They are encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting the community through a variety of initiatives and mechanisms. The young people's involvement in compiling the CYPP was impressive. The council's approach has used both the formal links with youth councils and schools and the more innovative approaches to young people in informal settings, such as the Reach Out and Reconnect group (ROAR), successfully consulting 350 young people at a city centre shopping plaza. It has the potential to be an established working partnership with the council. Young people were also involved in the selection and appointment of the director of children's services.

The council has sustained its actions to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people. The youth justice plan is a comprehensive document that was commended by the Youth Justice Board. The council has maintained good performance in managing the risk of looked after children offending. The proportion of young people reached by publicly funded youth services has increased year on year since 2002.

However, the council is aware that the level of participation of looked after children in case reviews is comparatively low, and has analysed those cases where the young person has not participated or been involved. It is devising different ways for young people to put their views forward, including using the intranet to communicate their views.

Achieving economic well-being

The council's contribution to improvement in this area is good.

Good childcare arrangements make a significant contribution to supporting families through offering childcare places, children's centres, and enabling parents to seek employment. During 2005/06, the Childcare Regeneration Service enabled 398 parents to receive training and gain employment, 203 being lone parents and a further 1,575 parents on low or modest incomes with childcare in areas of significant disadvantage.

Employment, education and training opportunities for care learners are similar to those available to the wider populations. The council makes good accommodation arrangements

for the vast majority of its care leavers, and 94.6% of them live in suitable housing. This proportion represents an increase of over 16% since last year.

Inspection judgements suggest that two-thirds of primary schools and one-third of secondary schools offer good or better opportunities for pupils to take part in activities to promote their economic well-being.

Education provision for 14 to 19 year olds is satisfactory, but standards vary. Attainment levels are generally below those nationally, but there have been improvements in both Key Stages 3 and 4, particularly at GCSE and AS levels, although results do not yet meet national levels. However, the authority has a robust 14 to 19 strategy and has developed a strong partnership with its Local Learning and Skills Council. A number of reviews and surveys have been initiated to evaluate both the way the provision is organised and to identify good practice, which can be applied across the authority. These are already beginning to have a positive influence in raising the quality and diversity of the provision.

There are 71.1% of young people in learning which, although below the national average, is above similar authorities. There is also some good practice in making available a range of vocational pathways such as apprenticeships, and there are generally good collaborative relationships with colleges.

The council's management of its services for children and young people, including its capacity to improve them further

The council has clear ambitions for making life for children and young people in Leeds vibrant and challenging, which are responsive to their needs and enable them to aim high. This has been matched with a significant increased investment in children's services for the current year. The council has adopted a commissioning model for the operation of the children's services directorate that puts children at the centre of its planning and to deliver outcomes for children through both internally and externally provided services.

Efficient mechanisms have been developed, enabling a shared understanding of local needs amongst partner organisations and resulting in improvements in the five outcome areas. The needs of individual children, young people and their families are effectively identified and recorded, and lead to appropriate allocations of resources. Although there are still some areas for improvement in most of the outcomes, there is strong evidence that the council is both aware of and actively addressing them.

The council has robust approaches to workforce planning and development through its comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy, including induction programmes for staff in both Education Leeds and Social Services, and training and development to support the many examples of integrated working.

The council recognises the challenge of the Every Child Matters agenda and new approaches are underway to improve partnership working within the council, for example, with traditional child focused services, and other key services such as housing and transport, and with external partners. The bold approaches are already being reflected in a team approach across departments and in the positive outcomes of many recent projects.

The council has successfully demonstrated its capacity to make improvement and provides good education and social care support for children and families.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> joint commissioning arrangements community based health services through schools and children's centres prompt referrals for young offenders manifesting acute and non-acute mental health difficulties schools enabling learners to be healthy. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy improve the access of young offenders to substance misuse assessment and intervention services.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> robust and well embedded case file audit system social worker allocation to children on the register and looked after children effective child protection registration system reflected in reviews, duration on the register and repeat referral rates stable placements for most looked after children good transition planning for children with disabilities schools ensuring learners stay safe. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve the timeliness of reviews for looked after children improve the completion of core assessment within prescribed timescales all residential care provision fully meeting the national minimum standards.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> early years provision number of schools causing concern range of innovative ideas to tackle weaknesses in attendance. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> attainment at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 reduce the levels of unauthorised absence.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> innovative ways of engaging young people to encourage them to participate and contribute to planning processes minimise the risk of looked after young people offending year-on-year increases in the proportion of young people reached through publicly funded youth services. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the engagement of looked after children in their reviews.

<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • childcare regeneration services that enabled parents to receive training and employment • support offered to care leavers • opportunities in school to prepare for future well-being • development of a robust 14 to 19 strategy. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve attainment levels for 14 to 19 year-olds.
<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarity of vision and innovative approach to council structure • needs analysis to improve services • approaches to workforce planning and development. 	<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>none</i>

Aspects for focus in a future joint area review or the next APA

- Effectiveness of the directorate structure to deliver the agenda of Every Child Matters.
- Effectiveness of the contraception and sexual health services for young people.
- Effectiveness of measures to raise attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Success of the programme to reduce unauthorised absence.
- Actions taken on the outcomes of the 14 to 19 strategy reviews.

We confirm that the children's services grade will provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) and will be published to the Audit Commission. The social care judgement is for CSCI information only.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

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JONATHAN PHILLIPS

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