

9 December 2009

Mrs Rosemary Archer
Director of Children's Services
Leeds City Council
6th Floor, East Merrion House
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Leeds
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Dear Mrs Archer

Children's services annual rating

Ofsted guidance published in May 2009 explained that the annual rating would derive from a new performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the council has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant *Every Child Matters* indicators in the new National Indicator Set (NIS).

In considering the evidence in the profile to determine the children's services rating for 2009 it has become clear that the continuing gaps in the data are significant, particularly those relating to aspects of social care and services for Looked After Children. Ofsted has decided therefore to use 2009 as a transitional year easing into the full application of the new system in 2010. As a consequence, although the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's rating, we have interpreted the performance bands with flexibility and exercised professional judgement with caution.

The annual rating 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, a rating of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, a rating of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects.

Children's services rating 2009

Children's services rating	Performs poorly (1)
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Children's services in Leeds City Council perform poorly. While the overall effectiveness of a majority of the local authority's inspected and regulated services and provision are good or better, there are significant weaknesses in areas of social care provision.

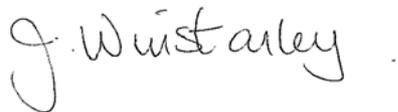
The joint area review of May 2008 found there was adequate provision for safeguarding and looked after children. However, the recent unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements found that the response to child protection referrals did not meet statutory guidance and did not ensure children were adequately safeguarded, noting a potential risk of significant harm to children and young people. This finding has contributed significantly towards determining the judgement of performing poorly. Provision in social care settings is variable in quality. A large majority of children's homes are good or better, although one is inadequate. The local authority's adoption service is good and its fostering agency was recently judged to be satisfactory. However, the private fostering arrangements are inadequate. Of three serious case reviews carried out, two were conducted adequately and one well.

The majority of childminders and childcare settings are good or better and this is better than in similar areas, although below performance found nationally. Performance in pupil referral units and the sixth form college is strong and above that found in similar areas and nationally. The proportion of primary schools that are good or better is in line with that found elsewhere.

However, performance in secondary schools, school sixth forms and special schools is below that found in similar areas and nationally, although no special school is inadequate.

Although performance against the very large majority of national indicators, including those for staying safe and enjoying and achieving, is at least in line with similar areas and national figures, there are some weaknesses. This is most notable in achievement for young children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the attainment of Asian children at the age of 11, and the attainment of Asian children and those of mixed ethnicity at age 16. The achievement gaps for those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable are too wide. A high number of young people in the youth justice system receive a custodial sentence. Although reducing, there are high numbers of young people not in education, employment or training.

The children's services rating is provided for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The rating of local authority children's services will contribute significantly to the managing performance theme of each local authority's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) organisational assessment and therefore to the score for each local authority overall.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, CAA