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Mrs Rosemary Archer
Director of Leeds Children's Services
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Dear Mrs Archer

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment for your local authority. The judgements in the letter draw on your review of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) where it was available, and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted, other inspectorates and relevant bodies. We are grateful for the information you provided to support this process and for the time given by you and your colleagues during the assessment.

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 3

Leeds City Council delivers a good level of service overall for children and young people. The capacity for further improvement is good and children's services are well led and managed. Good progress has been made in bringing together professionals from across the partnership to deliver high quality services that are built around the needs of children and young people. There has been significant change within the council's social care arrangements and some of these have yet to have a full impact on outcomes for children and young people. However, the council is making a good contribution in all other outcome areas in a city facing social and economic challenges.

Being healthy

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good.

The CYPP identifies clear strengths and priorities toward improving the health of children and young people in Leeds and there is a wide range of multi-agency strategic and operational groups in place to progress service development, which have led to gradually improved outcomes for children.

Strategies to improve school meals and to reduce childhood obesity were launched in 2006/07 and 40,000 children were involved in the 'Leeds be Healthy' challenge. A 'Wake Up and Shake Up' initiative enabled staff in 90% of primary schools to be trained to provide daily exercise sessions. The Primary Care Trust (PCT) is leading in the development of a physical activity strategy.

The PCT has developed a single plan to increase immunisations, which remain below national levels. General practitioners have been given increased incentives to increase the promotion of immunisation and the team responsible for looked after children and young people has commissioned services to get immunisations up to date. A campaign to raise awareness of immunisation was launched in 2007.

The proportion of mothers who breast-feed has gradually improved but it remains below the national average. Midwives and health visitors have received additional training to encourage uptake.

A well-managed and well-coordinated healthy schools programme has achieved beacon status. A very high proportion of schools have achieved healthy schools status, exceeding national targets. Most schools provide a good range of activities and most of the children responding to the Tellus2 survey indicated that they regularly undertook sport and other activities and did not smoke.

A small improvement in dental health outcomes has resulted from targeting services in areas of high deprivation where levels of tooth decay are at their highest. A new service has been commissioned for dental assessment of vulnerable groups, including looked after children and improved outcomes are projected. However, the level of tooth decay is still above average.

A review of the teenage pregnancy strategy resulted in the appointment of a Teenage Pregnancy Champion and there has been an increase in commissioned services to tackle fluctuations in teenage conception rates, which remain higher than average at 49 per thousand of 15-17 year olds. This was identified as an area for improvement in the annual performance assessment last year.

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has made steady progress towards developing a comprehensive provision and offers good support to vulnerable groups including looked after children and those with disabilities. The service provides 24-hour access to assessment and has made good progress in reducing waiting times which are lower than the national average. Good links between the CAMHS and the Youth Offending Service (YOS) facilitate the prompt referral and treatment of young offenders with mental health needs. The YOS has significantly increased the proportion of young people with substance misuse who receive screening, assessment and treatment; this was an area for development identified in the annual performance assessment last year.

The major reorganisation which unified the five Leeds Primary Care Trusts is leading to improved commissioning and consistency across services with more robust links to council and partner agencies. A new Commissioning Board is reviewing contracts for all services. Health staff working with children are more closely identified as part of integrated children's services and there are good examples of multi-agency working within children's centres and extended schools to promote children's health.

Areas for development

- Reduce the incidence of teenage conception.
- Increase annual health and dental checks for looked after children and young people.
- Increase take-up of immunisations.

Staying safe

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. Most schools provide good support to help pupils stay safe and build resilience. Most of the children who responded to the Tellus2 survey indicated that they felt safe around the area, on public transport, going to school, in school and at home.

A high proportion of referrals (73%) for children in need results in timely initial assessments. However, only 58% receive timely core assessments within timescales. Repeat referrals and re-registrations on the child protection register are low. This indicates good performance. All children on the child protection register are allocated qualified social workers. The timeliness of initial child protection conferences is slightly below that of similar councils at 31%, compared to 35% nationally.

The implementation of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), with its new constitution and structures, is now complete. The recent appointment of a new safeguarding manager and an independent chairperson to the LSCB has enabled the new strategic arrangements for safeguarding to be progressed. For example, an LSCB business plan has now been developed and ratified. The LSCB and executive now have a clear constitution and good representation by a variety of agencies including the voluntary sector. A wider range of LSCB operational sub-groups have been established, which are well attended by diverse agencies and able to progress LSCB priorities.

Good arrangements are in place to establish the whereabouts of missing children. An initiative by Education Leeds, for example, resulted in a reduction in the number of children registered as missing from education.

The number of looked after children and young people has increased and remains significantly higher than the national average. A multi-agency partnership to support looked after children was established in 2006/07 and has contributed to improved outcomes for looked after children. There has been an improvement in placement stability and the incidence of teenage conception amongst looked after children and young people has reduced. The number of adoptions of looked after children has increased from 4.5% to 7.9% and looked after children are increasingly involved in their reviews.

Inspections of the residential care for looked after children found that standards had improved following a review of residential care. However, three residential establishments were judged inadequate in 2007. One has been subsequently closed and the resources that were released have been reassigned to support the other establishments. An additional 25 permanent staff are being appointed and regular agency staff have provided the intervening cover. There has been investment in the refurbishment and improvement of the remaining establishments. A very high proportion of looked after children are placed locally.

The timeliness of reviews for looked after children and young people is significantly worse than found nationally and there has been a deterioration this year. Only 34% of reviews were held within timescales and this is poor despite the latest data showing some improvement. The proportion of looked after children who are from minority ethnic groups is significantly higher than average and has risen sharply this year with a growing number of unaccompanied asylum seekers.

An inter-agency group has been formed to commission and oversee services for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a new jointly funded manager post has been created to support this work. The authority has also appointed a coordinator to lead work across the local partnership on implementing the Early Support Programme, which integrates services for disabled young children and their families. The transition teams for children and young adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have ensured that more than 90% have transition plans in place.

Areas for development

- Improve the timeliness of reviews of looked after children and young people.
- Improve the completion of core assessments within timescales.
- Review provision of services to prevent the need for children and young people to be looked after.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this area is good. School improvement work is effective and focused. The proportion of schools placed in a category of concern by Ofsted is lower than in similar authorities. The quality of the post-inspection action plans produced by the local authority has improved considerably and the schools that are in a category are well supported. They are all making satisfactory or better progress. The latest results from national tests indicate that a number of the secondary schools with a notice to improve have made outstanding progress in raising standards. Education Leeds has a strong record of moving schools above national floor targets.

Early years provision continues to be a strength and there are indications of further improvements in performance. The high number of actions that were imposed on childminders when they first registered has now been reduced. Standards in Key Stages 1 and 2 continue to be in line both with similar authorities and national averages. In 2006, there were considerable improvements in attainment at Key Stage 3 and the average points score in national tests in all three core subjects increased. Standards at Key Stage 3 are now in line with comparable authorities and national averages. GCSE results continue to improve. The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, is increasing faster than nationally and is now in line with similar authorities. However, despite the proportion of students achieving at least one GCSE pass increasing at a faster pace than elsewhere, there are still more young people leaving school without any GCSE passes than in comparable authorities.

There has been a considerable reduction in the number of permanent exclusions from school and there are now significantly fewer than average. A wide range of innovative strategies have been introduced to improve attendance and there is evidence of improvement but the number of unauthorised absences in secondary schools remains high.

There is a very good range of recreational activities and voluntary learning provision for young people to enjoy. Large scale events in the holidays, staged by the council in partnership with voluntary organisations, have attracted over 45,000 young people and families since they started in 2004. The Leeds Breeze card encourages participation in sports and other activities by offering discounts to young people and the Maxcard gives looked after children free entry to museums and galleries around the district. There has been investment in creative play environments in children's centres and additional facilities have been provided for older children including BMX tracks and sports pitches. Arts provision for young people continues to flourish across the city.

Areas for development

- Reduce the number of unauthorised absences in secondary schools.
- Reduce the number of young people leaving school with no passes at GCSE.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this area is good. Leeds has been at the forefront of a number of initiatives to support the personal and social development of young people. It has a well-established and effective mentoring scheme that supports children and young people from disadvantaged areas and from minority ethnic backgrounds. The Investors in Pupils Award and the Stephen Lawrence Educational Standard both originated in Leeds and are nationally recognised for developing engagement and supporting cultural change.

Leeds has a very dynamic youth council that is well supported by active student councils in almost every school. Youth council members have been consulted on the distribution of funding for youth, major plans for city centre development, and on the appointment of senior managers in children's services.

Very good efforts are made to involve young people who are traditionally hard to reach, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, young carers and young Travellers. They are being encouraged to engage with service providers at many different levels and to take part in decision-making. The very successful Reach Out and Reconnect (ROAR) project has tripled its membership this year and now has over 650 members.

Key strategies to divert those at risk of anti-social behaviour have been successful and the number of anti-social behaviour orders has been more than halved over the last three years. There is a range of innovative and successful strategies to prevent youth crime and the number of first time offenders is falling. The Signpost project offers intensive parenting support for families of children at risk of offending and there is early evidence of success. There is still a high proportion of looked after children and young people involved in the Youth Justice System.

Good progress has been made on increasing the number of looked after children who participate in reviews. The proportion involved is still slightly below average but is rapidly increasing. Additional trained staff are making effective use of interactive information technology to encourage the children to communicate their views.

Area for development

- Reduce the number of looked after children and young people involved in the youth justice system.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this area is good. There is very good support for families and a wide range of successful joint initiatives have been introduced, including Sure Start. The provision of childcare is expanding faster than in other comparable authorities. Childcare is well planned and all parents, who live in areas of high deprivation and want to access training or employment, have a childcare guarantee. Leeds has a Beacon Status Award for its innovative work to help people tackle debt.

There are many well-established and effective learning partnerships across the city. Despite significant delays in the major reconfiguration of post-16 education and training across Leeds, the provision of vocational education for students in Key Stage 4 has rapidly increased. Good progress has been made in developing a common city-wide application process and an on-line area prospectus, including a prospectus for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The colleges in Leeds provide good educational and training opportunities both pre- and post-16. The local authority is working hard to improve the quality of vocational education offered by training providers and to make certain that it leads to worthwhile accreditation. There is still further work to do, however, to ensure that every young person has access to a good range of vocational opportunities from the age of 14.

The proportion of young people aged 16-18 who are not engaged in education, employment or training has been reduced and is now 1% below that in comparable authorities. The proportion of 19 year olds re-engaging in employment, education or training is improving in line with similar authorities. The qualifications of students leaving school are improving year on year. The proportion of school leavers achieving at least five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including mathematics and English, has improved rapidly and is now around the national average. In Leeds, the proportion of young people achieving Level 2 by the age of 19 is increasing at a faster pace than elsewhere and at 63% is approaching the average of 66% for comparable authorities. The proportion of young people achieving a Level 3 qualification by the age of 19 is also increasing faster than elsewhere and at 41% is already comparable with similar authorities. Inspection evidence shows that 70% of schools are rated good or outstanding for enabling students to achieve economic well-being.

Good progress has been made on providing decent housing for children, young people and families, and Leeds has an excellent record of providing suitable accommodation for care leavers. There is good support for children and young people who are looked after as they make the transition to adulthood and a very high proportion are still engaged in education, training or employment at the age of 19. The creation of the new post of headteacher of the virtual school for looked after

children is a key development in the continued drive to improve educational outcomes for these young people.

Area for development

- Ensure that every young person has access to a good range of vocational provision from the age of 14.

Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services

Grade 3

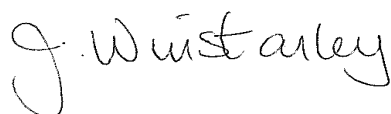
Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council has good capacity to improve its services for children and young people and management of these services is strong. The team of leaders and managers is dedicated and energetic with a shared vision and a clear long term strategy. A thorough review of the children and young people's plan shows that good progress is being made in many areas and there are shared priorities for further development with focused targeted outcomes. A significant number of new strategies have been introduced that are being implemented effectively but it is too early to see the full impact in a number of areas.

There is effective integration of services. Key joint appointments between health and children's services, for example, have strengthened joint working and 'locality enablers' are supporting multi-disciplinary arrangements on a more local level. A good range of strategic and operational management groups, for example, the Local Safeguarding Children's Board bring together the major players. Good performance management systems are being developed that align with those of partner agencies, and effective joint commissioning strategies are ensuring quality and value for money.

The children's services grade is the performance rating for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. It will also provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment to be published by the Audit Commission.

Yours sincerely



Juliet Winstanley
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Local Services Inspection