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Mr John Dixon  
Director of Children and Young People's Services  
West Sussex County Council  
Room 109  
County Hall  
West Street  
Chichester  
PO19 1RF

Dear Mr Dixon

## **Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in West Sussex County Council 2008**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2008 annual performance assessment (APA) for your council. The evaluations and judgements in the letter draw on a range of data and information which covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. As you know, the APA is not based on an inspection of your services and, therefore, can only provide a snapshot based on the evidence considered. As such, I am grateful to you for assuring the quality of the data provided.

Performance is judged on a four point scale as detailed in the handbook. I should emphasise that the grades awarded are based on an overall 'best fit' model. For instance, an outstanding judgement of Grade 4 reflects that overall most aspects, but not necessarily all, of the services in the area are working very well. We know that one of the features of outstanding provision is the drive for greater improvement and no council would suggest, and nor would Ofsted, that a judgement of outstanding indicates that everything is perfect. Similarly within a judgement of inadequate overall, Grade 1, there could be some aspects of the overall service that are adequate or even good. Judgements are made in a rounded way, balancing all of the evidence and giving due consideration to outcomes, local and national contexts, priorities and decision-making.



The following table sets out the grades awarded for performance in 2008.

<b>Assessment judgement area</b>	<b>APA grade</b>
Overall effectiveness of children's services	2
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	1
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	2

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale  
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate*

## Overall effectiveness of children’s services

Grade 2

West Sussex County Council delivers services for children and young people that overall meet the minimum requirements for users. The council’s capacity to improve, including the management of services is adequate.

In most outcome areas good progress has been maintained since the previous APA. However, progress in safeguarding and services for looked after children and young people has been unacceptably slow and some previously identified weaknesses still remain, for example the timeliness of initial assessments. It is for this reason that the judgements in relation to the council’s overall effectiveness and capacity to improve have reduced this year from the good grades achieved in 2007. While the council has appointed a number of senior managers and undertaken a significant reorganisation, the work in progress to address weaknesses has not yet fully impacted. However there is now a better clarity of purpose, a management structure aligned to the services key objectives and focused management arrangements, including performance management, to drive improvement. Improvement targets are each based on a rigorous and comprehensive needs analysis and partnership work is being strengthened. Services are making a positive difference to the majority of children and young people including those who are vulnerable and most at risk. Health indicators are broadly good and the council works well to provide a breadth of educational provision for parents, children and young people. Educational achievement is improving and more young people are involved successfully in education, employment or training. Many young people make a positive contribution to their communities through involvement in youth service activities and young people’s council and committees.

## Being healthy

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council’s analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Good rate of reduction in teenage pregnancy which means that the area is on track to meet the government’s 2010 target for teenage conception.</li> <li>▪ Good work in the council’s children’s homes to promote healthy lifestyles.</li> <li>▪ Good progress on achieving significant reductions in waiting times for child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) which has been assisted by the developing work of the Primary Mental Health workers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Despite generally good overall performance in relation to health care for children and young people who are looked after, too few benefit from annual medical examinations.</li> </ul>

## Staying safe

## Grade 1

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is inadequate. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area underestimate a number of important weaknesses and overvalue the areas where progress has been made. The table below sets out the evidence for the grade awarded.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Good progress has been made in respect of children and young people affected by bullying and domestic violence.</li> <li>▪ Care and staying safe standards have been judged as good in each of the council's residential children's homes, including the secure unit.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The percentage of initial assessments completed within timescale remains inadequate despite being the subject of a recommendation in the 2007 APA letter and at 35.6% is the fourth lowest nationally.</li> <li>▪ Too few core assessments are undertaken and performance has fallen to a rate of 74.7 per 10,000 children compared to an increased figure of 99.1 per 10,000 achieved in similar councils.</li> <li>▪ Too many children and young people with a child protection plan (39 on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2008) were not allocated to a qualified social worker.</li> <li>▪ Too many children and young people who are looked after by the council (68 on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2008) were not allocated to a qualified social worker.</li> <li>▪ Too many looked after children (20.4%) are placed in residential accommodation which exceeds the percentages in all other councils by 50%. This contributed to the 25% increase in expenditure on looked after children between 2006/07 and 2007/08 to a figure far higher than similar councils and the comparatively low levels of expenditure on children in need services (eighth lowest nationally).</li> <li>▪ Insufficient capacity in the Integrated Services Delivery Areas (ISDAs) to support and assess families with high levels of need and child protection concerns.</li> <li>▪ Too few reviews of looked after children (78%) were completed within the year which was the eighth worst performance in the country.</li> </ul>

## Enjoying and achieving

## Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. This is in line with the council's self-assessment. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

### Major strengths

- Performance at Key Stage 4 has improved with the percentage of young people gaining five or more GCSE grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, now in line with that of similar councils and above that found nationally. In comparison with similar councils, more schools reach the floor target of 30% five A\* to C including English and mathematics.
- The number of young people leaving care who achieved five GCSE grades A\* to C and at least one GCSE grade A\* to G has improved significantly and is now above that for similar councils and well above the national average. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also achieve above national levels at Key Stage 1 to 3 and more gained at least two GCSEs than the national average.
- No secondary schools are now in an Ofsted category of concern and the proportion of primary schools in categories is below that of similar councils and below the national average. Provision for children and young people excluded from school is now improving.
- Attendance in schools continues to be above the national average and that for similar councils.
- There has been a significant improvement in the proportion of permanently excluded learners provided with at least 21 hours alternative provision.

### Important weaknesses and areas for development

- The proportion of looked after children having a good quality written personal education plans (PEP) is lower than similar councils and/or national comparators but is improving.
- The number of looked after children missing at least 25 days of school is higher than similar councils and the national average.

## Making a positive contribution

**Grade 3**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

### Major strengths

- The council continues to have Beacon Council status for the positive engagement of young people and the West Sussex youth service is the first County service, one of only 12 nationally, to receive the National Youth Agency quality mark on participation.
- There has been a significant reduction in the number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System. The overall reduction is almost double the target.
- Good account is taken of the diverse needs of looked after children through

<p>effective mechanisms to hear their individual and collective views and opinions on the quality of the service provision they receive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in residential care are offered outstanding opportunities to make a positive contribution to their care and lives. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities generally participate in a broad range of cultural and leisure activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The number of looked after children, particularly the very youngest, who participated in their statutory reviews was below that of similar councils.</li> <li>▪ Although only slightly above national averages, too many children and young people re-offend and too many looked after children and young people receive final warnings, reprimands or were convicted.</li> </ul>

## Achieving economic well-being

**Grade 3**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proportion of young people aged 16 to 19 who are not in employment, education or training has continued its downward trend and is below both national levels and similar councils.</li> <li>▪ There has been a significant increase in the numbers of young people completing an apprenticeship, diploma pilots, increased flexibility and young apprenticeship programmes, this, along with school work experience placements, has strengthened provision and provided good learning opportunities.</li> <li>▪ The participation of black and ethnic minority young people is closely monitored and the target to reduce the number not in employment, education and training was soon exceeded and then further reduced.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The proportion of young people who are eligible, having pathway plans that give appropriate future advice and guidance, is below that for similar councils.</li> </ul>

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

**Grade 2**

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is adequate and its management of these services is also adequate. However there is a history of inadequately structured and focused service provision along with weak strategic and operational management in safeguarding and looked after children's

services. This has resulted in poor quality social care services that has adversely affected the outcomes and life chances of vulnerable and looked after children and young people, and overall performance has deteriorated to inadequate. Since the 2005 JAR and the last APA the council has made progress in other outcome areas against most recommendations and some of that progress has been significant. For example the number of young people completing apprenticeships and the achievement of looked after children in GCSE or GNVQ qualifications have both improved well. However until recently insufficient or no progress has been made in relation to those recommendations relating to initial and core assessments, the timeliness of looked after children's reviews or the allocation of qualified social workers. Following a significant reorganisation, and the introduction of new senior managers, accountabilities and responsibilities have been redefined and action plans to address all of the outstanding areas of concern, including those affecting the Youth Offending Service, have been developed and implemented. However it is too early to identify sustained and sustainable evidence of impact although local, unvalidated performance information is showing some significant improvements in key areas of concern such as child protection work and statutory reviews.

Capacity challenges resulting from the difficulties in recruiting social workers remain. Action has been taken to increase the complement of skilled and experienced social workers in order to secure the best standards of practice in the key and complex area of safeguarding. Value for money has been judged by the Audit Commission to be good and the council has continued to address the challenges exerted by being one of the lowest funded councils in the country. It has been successful in some areas in achieving efficiency savings by refocusing business processes and distributing these to priority areas but significant challenges remain in key areas such as the looked after children budget where a large increase in expenditure has had a consequential effect on the level of expenditure on children in need which is now comparatively very low. Councillors are increasingly committed to exercising their responsibilities as corporate parents and a number of positive initiatives are in place to build on recent progress and to ensure that looked after young people participate in, and derive benefit from, their relationships with the council.

### **Major strengths**

- Imaginative deployment of resources has contributed to significant improvements in access to CAMHS.
- Good knowledge of individual schools and strong support for school improvement results in timely and appropriate interventions and a good rate of progress in improving standards with notable increases in the attainment of a significant number of looked after children and young people.
- Reductions in the numbers of young people not in employment, education and training and improvements in those completing apprenticeships and being involved in other work based learning.
- Very good levels of engagement with children and young people through formal consultation, focus groups and targeted outreach that engages all groups, particularly those that are more vulnerable.

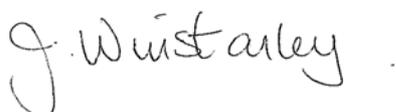
### **Important weaknesses and areas for development**

- Until very recently, action to address recommendations from the 2006 and 2007 APAs was insufficient or no progress was made in respect of initial and core assessments, allocation to qualified social workers and timely case reviews.
- Insufficient management capacity to respond to performance and management deficiencies with rigour and imagination.
- Inadequate strategic and operational management of the Youth Offending service which contributed to its performance being in the lowest category awarded by the Youth Justice Board, while at the same time operating outside of national standards, without the required derogation, since 2005.

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.

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.

Yours sincerely

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

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection