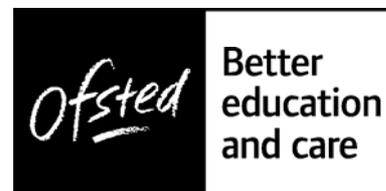


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Making Social Care
Better for People



Mr R Back
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Dear Mr Back

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN WEST SUSSEX

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment 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.	2

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

West Sussex County Council delivers consistently above the minimum requirements for children and young people. The majority of services can demonstrate how they are contributing to improving the achievement and well-being of young people. There is excellent multi-agency working and joint commissioning has been used effectively to improve services. The council has recently achieved Beacon Status for the 'Positive Engagement of Young People'. Children and young people have been involved in the development of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and in evaluation and monitoring of services and staff recruitment.

All of the recommendations from last year's joint area review (JAR) have been subject to carefully targeted action and progress has been regularly reviewed. The strategic work has been completed and the effect on outcomes will need to be monitored closely.

There are some improvements to be made in social care services. Staffing levels and lengthy court proceedings have had a negative impact on figures for adoptions and not all looked after children have an allocated social worker. There are also further improvements to be made in the timeliness of reviews and the number of looked after children who have personal education plans. The council has recognised that there is a need to improve standards in schools at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4, and underachieving schools are being subject to more robust challenge.

The council has a clear vision for the development of children's services, with consistent themes running through the CYPP and the Local Area Agreement, which was signed in March 2006 and has good capacity to improve its services further.

Being healthy

The council makes a good contribution towards improving the health of children and young people in the area. There are strong relationships with health partners and there are examples of resources being pooled effectively to provide services, for example, to provide a new sexual health clinic. Children and young people in areas of deprivation are considered a priority and multi-agency led activities are taking place in such areas. A strategy is now in place to improve access to speech and language therapy services across the county, following a recommendation from the JAR.

Pupils are also increasingly aware of the need to eat healthily and the number of schools achieving the 'Healthy Schools Award' is above the target level. Approximately 50% of secondary schools have trained staff to screen and assess pupils for substance misuse and over 300 young people have received help and advice. The Drug and Alcohol Action Team has increased its services to families by providing two new drop-in centres. Whilst there has been a commendable reduction of 18.8% in teenage pregnancy figures over six years, which is much higher than similar authorities, most of the reduction was in the first year and improvement has slowed down; the council needs to ensure that progress is accelerated.

The health needs of looked after children continue to be met at a high level.

There have been improvements to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), with further changes to be made. There are plans to have integrated co-located teams in schools to pick up problems at an early stage. Waiting times have been reduced from thirteen weeks to four weeks in the north of the county and similar improvements are planned in the south.

Staying safe

The council's contribution to this outcome is adequate. It promotes and secures the safety of most children and young people, but there are some areas where improvement is needed.

In general, children and young people are provided with a safe environment. Anti-bullying strategies are well established with some schools developing innovative approaches.

The implementation of the Domestic Violence Strategy has led to a positive improvement in the reporting of incidents. The number of children harmed in road accidents is reducing and is likely to exceed national targets.

The council continues to achieve good performance in its management of children on the Child Protection Register (CPR). All children on the register have an allocated social worker. Re-registrations have fallen to a level that represents very good performance and 99% of reviews are carried out on time.

The recommendations of the JAR have been followed through to improve the quality of services provided to the most vulnerable children and young people, and the findings of a serious case review have been used to inform practice and management. For example, the auditing of files is now being carried out more rigorously. Unallocated cases are monitored on a monthly basis. The impact of these changes on improving the outcomes for children and young people will need to be determined over the coming months.

There has been a focus on improving the percentage of core assessments completed within 35 working days. This has led to the target being exceeded, despite an increase in the overall number of assessments being carried out.

Qualified social workers have been allocated to 87% of looked after children, which is a slightly lower figure than for other similar councils. Currently, the majority of reviews of looked after children are not undertaken promptly enough and the council has already taken steps to address this matter. Looked after children themselves do not make sufficient contribution to their reviews. The number of looked after children who have had three or more placements during the year is low, which is very good, although longer-term stability of placements has fallen slightly. A more strategic approach has been taken to the securing of placements. For example, having only a small team of

social workers arranging placements and using block contracts to improve value for money. However, the cost of services for looked after children is still higher than in similar councils.

There have been improvements in staffing levels in some areas but the council reports that staff shortages and lengthy court processes have had a negative impact on the figures for the adoption of looked after children. Additionally, the number of children placed for adoption within 12 months of a decision being made that adoption was in their best interest has fallen from 72% to 52%.

Local authority residential and fostering services are generally compliant with national standards and action is taken promptly when there are shortfalls. Parents and carers have been involved in developing a new residential service for children with disabilities and young people in residential homes are able to have a say in the decoration of their rooms.

A comprehensive, multi-agency protocol has been developed to support a smooth transition for young people with learning disabilities into adult services. Young people and their parents have been involved in the development of an information guide that is about to be published.

One of the recommendations of the JAR in 2005 was that rigorous quality assurance procedures needed to be established for Joint Access Teams. Changes have been made at strategic and operational level to establish rigorous quality assessment procedures for Joint Access Teams. The importance of the family has been seen as central to the team's effectiveness, to the point where a parent has been appointed to a lead professional role.

The council is not able to give details relating to the ease of access to services and outcomes for children and young people from ethnic minorities, as it does not gather and record this information rigorously enough. Steps are being taken to rectify this matter.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution the council makes to ensure that children and young people achieve at school and enjoy their education and leisure activities is good.

Good progress has been made in Key Stage 1 with attainment above national averages, particularly in writing and mathematics. Pupils make satisfactory progress between Key Stages 1 and 2. Standards in Key Stage 2 are in line with national averages in English and mathematics, and above average in science. There is scope for improvement in standards in Key Stage 2, particularly in English.

In secondary schools, standards at Key Stage 3 are above the national average in English and science, and in line with mathematics. Pupils make good progress from Key Stage 2. However, standards are not rising as fast in West Sussex as they are nationally and the gap between local results and those achieved nationally is narrowing.

Pupils in Key Stage 4 do not make as much progress as pupils in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 GCSE results for those pupils achieving 5 A* - C improved slightly and are in line with the national average, as are all other GCSE results. However, results for pupils achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs have not improved significantly over the past five years, rising by just 1.59%, whereas national results have improved by 7.75% in the same period. Through its own analysis of performance data, West Sussex has recognised the need to improve standards at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. Underachieving schools are now challenged more robustly and supported through a targeted programme. This has helped schools in categories of concern and others considered 'at risk' by the authority.

The council has developed a strategy, and identified priorities, to address the educational underachievement of looked after children. Although there has been some improvement, not enough of these pupils have their own personal education plans.

Attendance in primary schools is consistently above national levels with low levels of both authorised and unauthorised absence. In secondary schools, overall attendance is consistently in line with national levels, although this situation is not spread evenly across all schools. The local authority employs a wide range of strategies to improve attendance and there is strong collaboration between relevant services. Nearly all secondary schools are expected to meet their targets for attendance.

School inspections have found behaviour to be at least good in the vast majority of schools inspected. Overall, the rate of permanent exclusions has been reducing consistently over the last three years and is now only slightly above average. Tuition time and provision for pupils who do not attend school has improved. A new tracking system is currently being piloted, which will allow for more efficient monitoring and evaluation of both provision for those pupils and the progress they make.

A good range of leisure, recreational and cultural activities are available for young people. Youth service provision is well targeted at vulnerable groups, although those in more rural areas find transport difficult. In addition, the expanding programme for extended schools is widening provision further.

Making a positive contribution

The contribution of the council's children's services to supporting children and young people in this area is good.

Young children get good support in early years settings to develop socially and emotionally. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong in almost all schools inspected. Children and young people are given good support at key

transition points in their lives. In particular, the support given to young carers has improved through developing the relationships between the young people and the support practitioners.

Inspection evidence shows that the extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community is at least good in most schools. Children and young people are actively involved and regularly consulted. West Sussex has Beacon Council status for the 'Positive Engagement of Young People'. Groups such as the Youth Cabinet and Eco-Ambassadors have important roles as consultative bodies and organise events such as the 'Moving out of the Toilets' conference. This promoted good practice in school councils and engagement in active decision making. Children and young people have been included in the development of integrated working practices and a Young Person/Parent Voice project focusing on young people with learning difficulties and disabilities and their families has been established to increase involvement. The participation of looked after children is improving but they still need to be more closely involved in their reviews.

West Sussex has drawn up an anti-social behaviour strategy and provided development programmes for young offenders. Current rates of re-offending are slightly lower than national figures. Although the rates of final warnings, reprimands and convictions of looked after children have improved slightly, there is room for further improvement.

Achieving economic well-being

The council makes a good contribution to children and young people's economic well-being.

There continues to be a strong early years and childcare partnership and good quality provision, although the rate of growth in childcare settings is slightly lower than the national average. West Sussex has successfully targeted early years' provision in the more deprived areas of the authority.

Young people are well prepared for working life. In most schools, learners develop good workplace skills that contribute to their future economic well-being. Few young people are not in employment or education and training. This is supported by a strong relationship with Connexions in order to further reduce these figures. There is good collaboration in the planning and delivery of post-16 education and the authority works effectively with the local Learning and Skills Council. Multi-agency funded vocational skill centres are improving the range of opportunities available to young people.

West Sussex has targeted regeneration initiatives in areas where there is greatest need, supported by strategic partnerships with the local district councils. Housing for young people has improved through the opening of two new facilities supporting vulnerable young people. However, not enough young people leaving care at age 19 are in suitable accommodation.

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

The council has a clear vision for the development of services for children and young people. The CYPP has set clearly focused activities against all of the outcome areas, designed to lead to improvements for children and young people. The relevant partners and the main sources of funding have been identified for each priority. The targets take information into account from surveys and inspections, and have also been carried forward into the Local Area Agreement. Consultation with children and young people, including those from ethnic minorities, is demonstrated across many areas. Their views are valued and acted upon. As a result West Sussex has Beacon Council status for the 'Positive Engagement of Young People'.

The West Sussex Children's Trust, chaired by the Chief Executive, has been established for some time. It has also encapsulated all of the new statutory functions of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. There is strong corporate support for the development of children's services. A number of multi-agency groups, such as the Children's Mental Health Strategic Commissioning Board and the Special Needs and Disabilities Group, have been established and are enabling greater coordination of services and stronger joint commissioning.

A fundamental service review is taking place with external consultants to identify £15 million of savings across the County Council that will be re-directed to enable more investment in preventive initiatives.

The JAR found that the number of vacancies for social workers was having an impact on the quality of services. Whilst the council has targeted its resources to areas of deprivation and has recently appointed a number of social care staff, vacancy levels have increased slightly and this needs careful monitoring. Performance data is monitored regularly but has not always led to improvements and there has been a lack of pace in progress against the social care indicators. A number of indicators fell to a lower level than planned.

Overall, the council has good capacity to make further improvements to its services for children and young people.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong multi-agency working • promotion of healthy lifestyles • good involvement of parents and carers • meeting the health needs of looked after children • numbers of schools gaining 'Healthy Schools Award'. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop the speech and language therapy service • development of CAMHS • continue the downward trend in teenage pregnancies.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing a safer environment • child protection reviews and re-registrations • progress on timescales for core assessments. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • timeliness of reviews and allocation of social workers for looked after children • adoptions of looked after children • workforce recruitment and retention • ensure that children and young people from ethnic minorities have good access to services, with positive outcomes.
<p><i>Enjoying and Achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • targeted guidance and support for parents and carers • standards at Key Stages 1 and 3 • development of Level 2 provision in schools • attendance in primary schools • voluntary learning and recreational provision • development of extended schools • support for schools placed in an Ofsted category. 	<p><i>Enjoying and Achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • percentage of pupils gaining 5 A* - C grades at GCSE • the rate of improvement in standards at Key Stage 2 • personal education plans for looked after children.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beacon Council status for the 'Positive Engagement of Young People' • contribution of early years settings to young people's social and emotional development 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transition to adult services for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities • further improve the rates of final warnings, reprimands and convictions of looked after children

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in schools • involvement of young people in community groups such as the Youth Cabinet • good support for young people at key transition points. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribution of looked after children to their reviews.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • targeted childcare provision to meet the needs of parents • good preparation for working life: low numbers of young people not in employment, education or training • increasing provision for vocational education. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suitable housing for young people and care leavers.
<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clear corporate vision with measurable outcomes and resources identified • strong multi-agency working • strong engagement with children and young people. 	<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the rate of improvement across a number of children's social care indicators.

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

- Outcomes in teenage conception rates, speech and language therapy and access to the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service.
- The rate of improvement in social care indicators and the resulting outcomes for children and young people, including:
 - timeliness of reviews
 - contribution to reviews
 - the level of adoptions
 - the rates of final warnings, reprimands and convictions and
 - the percentage who have personal education plans
- Standards in Key Stages 2 and 4.
- Developments in outcomes for children and young people from ethnic minorities.
- Improvements in access to suitable housing for young people and care leavers.

- The recruitment and retention of social care staff.
- Outcomes for young people following the implementation of the transitions protocol.

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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Commission for Social Care Inspection