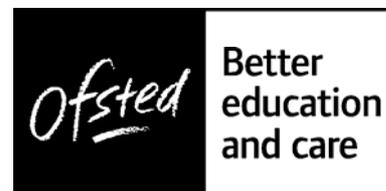


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Making Social Care
Better for People



Mr Terry Walsh - Acting Director of
Education
Glenys Jones - Director of Social
Services
Sunderland City Council

1 December 2005

Dear Colleague

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SUNDERLAND CITY COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 20 July 2005 to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your 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.

Being healthy

The authority shows good performance against this outcome. School inspection reports show that there are good levels of participation in sport. The authority has established a very effective federation based on three hub specialist sports schools and the Culture and Community Services Directorate, whose work is having a positive impact across the city. There is increasing access to a widening range of sporting and outdoor activities and support and remission schemes are ensuring access for children and young people from lower income groups. The authority has also established specific targets for increased participation of pupils from black and minority ethnic groups in such activities. Some 38 schools have been awarded Healthy Schools status and another 80 are working on the programme. A particularly imaginative element of this work is the involvement of children and young people in designing school dining rooms and developing new menus. Further initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles include the Wear Healthy Nursery programme, the Drug Education Road Show and the obesity screening programme.

All schools are supported with developing their sex education policies and the authority provides a structured programme of awareness-raising and support for parents. There is a multi-disciplinary teenage pregnancy team working towards locally set targets. However, despite the good partnership work in this area, teenage pregnancy rates are high and continue to rise.

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), with a growing social work contribution, provides a good service. Young people referred via the Youth Offending Team (YOT), both for acute and non-acute interventions, receive a timely service from CAMHS. The health of looked after children is promoted and monitored carefully and has been so for some time.

Staying safe

The authority's contribution to help children and young people to stay safe is good. Schools' efforts to promote pupils' care, welfare, health and safety were judged, in inspections, as good or very good and all schools had child protection procedures in place. A recent Ofsted local authority inspection found that schools clearly understood their role in child protection and received good support and training in this area. All schools were making efforts to address bullying. Patterns of racist incidents in schools are monitored although the causes of the incidents were felt not to be sufficiently interrogated. There was progress in increasing involvement with the Sikh community in some particular schools but that was not reflected in wider representation on governing bodies.

Within the social care setting, the authority also performed well. Children looked after continue to enjoy a high degree of stability in their placements and many have been successfully placed for adoption. The establishment of a dedicated permanency team has contributed to this outcome and there are also high numbers of children placed in foster care as well as adoption placements. The child protection system is well managed: all children on the child protection register (CPR) are reviewed on time and have an allocated qualified social worker. There is evidence of strong partnership working and the local safeguarding children board is now established. However, the number of looked after children remains high. The authority is aware of this and is examining the reasons, including the possible impact of preventative services on referral rates and subsequent intervention. The authority is also attempting to address the issue through its placement strategy.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution of the authority towards this outcome is by and large satisfactory although there are examples of good performance. There is a considerable degree of variability in the standards achieved by pupils across primary and secondary schools.

Early years provision is good. All three year olds have access to a place and inspections of care providers and nurseries have found them to be good or very good. Standards in Key Stages 1 and 2 are in line with averages nationally and for similar authorities and rates of improvement above average. In Key Stage 3, however, standards are below the national average but in line with similar authorities. The rate of improvement is below or well below both averages. In Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) or its

equivalent is below the national average, but in line with similar authorities. Rates of improvement are in line with the national average and above that for similar authorities. The value added to pupils' performance between Key Stages 1 and 2 is slightly above average and rising. Thereafter, however, it declines, so that the value added from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 is below average. Therefore, too many pupils do not fulfil their early potential.

Authorised absences are falling but not quickly enough, so that performance continues to be worse than average. Unauthorised absences present a more positive picture, with primary schools performing better than average and secondary schools being in line with the national average. Despite this, there is an upward trend in unauthorised absences in both phases. At primary level, exclusion rates are average while at secondary school they are better than that. More pupils than average are educated outside school but the rate of their reintegration is satisfactory.

Outcomes for vulnerable children and young people are better than national indicators and reflect the impact of the authority's priorities. The proportion of care leavers with five A* to G grades at GCSE is good and there has been an improvement in the numbers gaining one A* to G. The attendance of looked after children has improved and is now at an acceptable level. Provision for pupils with special educational needs has shown notable improvements over the last two years and was judged highly satisfactory in the recent Ofsted report.

The authority provides a considerable range of recreational and voluntary learning provision, particularly in the areas of arts, sports and music.

Making a positive contribution

Performance is good against this outcome. Section 122 inspections of nurseries show that among full-day, sessional day-care and multiple day-care providers, the personal and social education that children receive is generally good or very good. Inspections of schools also show that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is never less than good. The work of schools to ensure that children and young people enjoyed freedom from bullying, racism and other forms of harassment was similarly judged as never less than good. All children with special educational needs have transition plans in to education and all vulnerable children, where a risk is highlighted, have transition plans for Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. The Behaviour and Education Support Team has been judged as excellent by HMI inspection.

There is a range of initiatives, particularly in the area of youth offending which are having a measurable positive impact on diverting young people away from crime and the YOT performs very well against Youth Justice Board performance requirements. The restorative justice system in place has a national reputation. However, in terms of reducing re-offending, the target of 5% education has not been met. The number of looked after children receiving convictions and final warnings has worsened. The authority recognises the need to find more effective ways of addressing this.

There are a number of consultation groups in place for young people and a particular one for looked after children, called 4um. The proportion of looked after children communicating their views to looked after reviews is high and there is a system of exit interviews in place for looked after children moving placement.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes under this heading are generally good. They are better for education than for social care services.

The authority has conducted a fundamental review of its 14 to 19 provision and the success of this is reflected in the recent Ofsted inspection of the local authority which rated provision in this area as highly satisfactory. However, that report identified the need to consolidate the work done to date and called for more progress in the 14 to 16 curriculum strand. Although collaborative joint school-college sixth forms were well established, three secondary schools had still not agreed their overall strategy in this area.

The take-up of vocational courses among young people has recently increased by 59%. The participation rate in 2004 was 84.49%, just below the target of 85%. Exclusions have been reduced and pupils' results in vocational courses are steadily improving. The average point scores for pupils entered for general certificate of education, vocational education, advanced level and advanced subsidiary examinations are in line with national average and above that for similar authorities.

All disabled young people aged 14 and over have a transition plan. The Pupils First Project is successfully leading to extended work placements for Key Stage 4 pupils and a residential unit for young parents has been established to give them access to work. Various agencies are working together to ensure that specialist early years assessment provision for profound special educational needs is made available at one point to give further support to parents. Despite the progress made, however, the proportion of 16 to 18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training is too high.

Within the social care arena, every care leaver has a personal adviser. However, there are fewer care leavers in education, employment or training than in other comparative authorities and the numbers in suitable accommodation is below the council's own target. With regard to children with disabilities, there are fewer receiving services than among comparative councils, although this may be a result of universal services being more accessible, as the authority believes. The take up of direct payments is very low among this group, particularly set against the huge increase in take up among adults. Children and young people would also benefit from a more active approach to the implementation rather than the evaluation of person-centred planning.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health promotion initiatives in schools • health of children looked after. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teenage pregnancy.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stability of placements for children looked after • adoption of children looked after • well managed child protection system • support and training for child protection in schools. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high numbers of children looked after.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rate of improvement at Key Stages 1 and 2 • value added from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 • permanent exclusion rates in secondary schools • educational attainment of children looked after. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attainment at KS3 • value added from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 ▪ Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 ▪ Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4 • further reduction in authorised absences at both primary and secondary level.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • restorative justice system • opportunities for gathering views of children and young people. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rate of convictions and final warnings for children looked after.

<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extensive range of vocational courses and support to disengaged young people • all disabled young people have a transition plan • development of specialist early years assessment provision, for children with profound needs, located at one point. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • young people not in education, employment or training. • accommodation for care leavers • take up of direct payments among children with disabilities.
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Service management

The council's reputation for the robustness of its service management and financial management is reflected in the fact that it retained its excellent comprehensive performance assessment status last year and was judged to be continuing to perform at a high level. The Audit Commission judged their overall capacity to ensure future progress as remaining high. There is a five year financial strategy in place to support the Children's Placement Strategy. The council has well-established multi-agency partnerships and the system of Modernisation and Reform Groups (MaRGs) provide planning links across health, social care and education. There is a shadow Children's Trust board in place and a joint commissioning executive group. The project team, leading on the development of the Children's Trust is funded until March 2006.

At the time of the annual performance assessment meeting, the post of Director of Children's Services was unfilled, although the authority was about to begin its selection process within the following week. The authority recognised in its self-assessment that difficulties in recruiting some staff puts pressure on the capacity of the workforce in certain areas of social care.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Healthy lifestyles are promoted for children and young people:

- teenage pregnancy.

Staying safe

Children and young people are provided with a safe environment:

- numbers of children looked after.

Enjoying and achieving

Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and to achieve highly:

- performance at Key Stage 3.

Making a positive contribution

Action is taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people:

- convictions and final warnings among looked after children.

Achieving economic well-being

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to achieve economic well-being:

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to achieve economic well being:

- outcomes for care leavers
- outcomes for children with disabilities.

Final judgements

Please see your final annual performance assessment judgements attached at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY
Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS
Director – Quality, Performance and Methods
Commission for Social Care Inspection

APA final judgements 2005: Sunderland City Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
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 capacity to improve its services for children and young people	3

1

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