

9 December 2010

Dr Sonia Sharp  
Director, Children and Young People's Directorate  
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Dear Dr Sharp

## Annual children's services assessment

Ofsted guidance published in July 2010 explains that the annual assessment of children's services is derived from the performance profile of the quality of services and outcomes for children and young people in each local area. This performance profile includes findings from across Ofsted's inspection and regulation of services and settings for which the local authority has strategic or operational responsibilities, either alone or in partnership with others, together with data from the relevant indicators in the National Indicator Set (NIS).

In reaching the assessment of children's services, Ofsted has taken account of all inspected and regulated services for children and young people, arrangements for making sure children are safe and stay safe and performance against national measures. More weight has been given to the outcomes of Ofsted's inspections and regulatory visits (Blocks A and B in the performance profile).

The annual assessment 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, an assessment of 'performs excellently' does not mean all aspects of provision are perfect. Similarly, an assessment of 'performs poorly' does not mean there are no adequate or even good aspects. As in 2009, while the performance profile remains central to Ofsted's assessment, meeting or not meeting the minimum requirements alone does not define the grade. The assessment has involved the application of inspector judgement.

## Sheffield City Council children's services assessment 2010

Children's services assessment	Performs well (3)
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Children's services in Sheffield City Council perform well.

The majority of types of services, settings and institutions inspected by Ofsted are good or better and none is inadequate overall. Services and settings for more children and young people whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are particularly good. Almost all special schools and all special school sixth forms and pupil referral units are good or better. The local fostering and adoption agencies and almost all children's homes are also good. Nursery and Early Years Foundation Stage settings are good, as are school sixth forms. Secondary schools are not doing as well: inspections show that about half are good but three of the local authority's schools are inadequate, as well as two local academies.

An unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services in August 2009 found some strengths and a number of areas for development. A full inspection in October 2010 found that services for both safeguarding and looked after children were adequate.

National performance measures show the very large majority of outcomes are in line with the averages for England or for similar areas. Results in national tests show steady improvement and are in line with similar areas for 11- and 16-year-olds. At the age of 16 the gaps in achievement for children with special educational needs, and those from low-income families, are not narrowing over time. Nineteen-year-olds in Sheffield, including those from low-income families, do not gain as many good GCSEs or equivalent qualifications as those from similar backgrounds across the country but the latest results show a slight improvement. Despite improvements over time, too many primary schools do not meet the expected minimum standards.

### Key areas for further development

- Increase the number of secondary schools that are good or better.
- Reduce the number of primary schools that do not meet the expected standards.
- Increase the number of 19-year-olds, including those from low-income families, who gain a qualification.

### Outcomes for children and young people

Local arrangements to encourage children and young people to live healthy lives are usually successful. Nearly all types of schools and the local fostering and adoption agencies are good at this, although childminders, childcare providers and pupil referral units do not do as well. There are now better services for children and young people with mental health and emotional difficulties, increased satisfaction by young

people in the quality of local parks, and a good improvement in reducing the number of young people who say they have recently taken alcohol or been involved in substance misuse. There is also a comparatively high rate of screening for chlamydia. There is good local knowledge of how many mothers are still breast-feeding their babies after six weeks and this number continues to show good improvement. However more children are now overweight at the age of five and 11 and, although the number of children who take part in sport regularly is similar to that elsewhere, this number has not risen as much over time as in other areas.

The recent inspection of safeguarding found that nearly all work to safeguard children is good. Ofsted's inspections of services and settings confirm this. Within the community, fewer children say they are bullied than in similar areas and, despite a recent increase, over time the number of children killed or seriously injured on the roads has reduced at the same rate as that found nationally. The unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services found strengths in the commitment and motivation of social care staff, and in the action taken to safeguard children who experience or witness domestic abuse. The inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services found that excellent progress had been made with safeguarding work and that all the development points from the unannounced inspection of front-line child protection services had been addressed. However, it found a notable weakness in the overall quality and managerial oversight of case file recording. Once placed, children in care are able to stay in the placement for a reasonable length of time, although too many children have to change placements.

Services and settings for children and young people whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are particularly good at helping them to do well and enjoy their learning. Provision is not as strong in academies and the sixth form college. The local authority is successfully reducing the number of secondary schools not reaching the expected standards. However, the number of primary schools not reaching these standards remains far too high and, despite steady improvement, children do not do as well in national tests as their peers in similar local authorities. Encouragingly, in 2010, provisional data show that results at the age of 11 are continuing to improve and the local authority reports a significant reduction in the number of primary schools not meeting the expected minimum level. Standards in secondary schools rose faster than comparators in 2009 and, by the age of 16, the number of young people who gain five or more good GCSEs, although still not high enough, is close to that in similar areas. Behaviour in secondary schools is slow to improve and is not good enough. The number of pupils who are often absent from secondary schools is showing a good reduction and is in line with similar areas. Children from some minority ethnic groups do not do as well as others at the age of 11 and 16.

Successful arrangements for involving children and young people in planning and reviewing local services have been in place for several years. There is an annual survey to seek young people's views and representatives of the Youth Council are part of the 0–19 Partnership Board. Most schools and children's homes are good at involving young people in decision-making and activity in their communities. This is not as strong in pupil referral units and the local fostering agency. Re-offending by young people in Sheffield is better than in similar areas and by most measures the

youth offending service works well. There has been a reduction in the number of young people caught committing an offence for the first time. Improvements are also evident in the increase in the number of young people who have offended who are now in education, training or work and in finding them a suitable place to live. The Youth Justice Board has judged that the youth offending team is performing excellently against the national indicators and has good capacity and capability to sustain and improve performance.

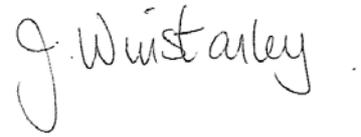
There is mixed success in how well services and settings promote the future economic well-being of children and young people. This is good in some individual settings, for example the sixth form college, special schools and the residential special schools. However, it is not as strong in primary and secondary schools, childcare, pupil referral units, the local fostering agency and the residential family centre. The local authority knows that too few young people gain qualifications at the age of 19 and has commissioned a study to investigate the reasons for this. After year-on-year improvement since 2006 the number of 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, training or work stayed the same this year but is close to that of similar local authorities. Latest available figures show the number of 17-year-olds in school, college or other training is slightly higher than in similar areas. The local authority has a range of initiatives planned to bring about further improvements. Recent data show improvements in both the number of care leavers in education, training or work and the number who are given a suitable place to live when they leave care.

### **Prospects for improvement**

The local area's review of its Children and Young People's Plan demonstrates good progress in important areas; it is also clear about what still needs to be done. Priorities include raising aspirations and seeking to minimise the impact of challenging economic times. Effective partnership working has brought about some good improvements, for example in health and, notably, in safeguarding services. The inspection of front-line child protection services found managers and staff had a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the service. Ofsted's monitoring visits to weaker schools show that the local authority is doing good work to help them get better. The inspection of safeguarding and services for looked after children found that both leadership and management and the capacity for improvement in respect of these services were good. The local authority is fully aware that, although its nursery provision is strong, the quality of its childminders is weaker than in similar areas. Accordingly, it has improved the training and support available, for example through performance clinics, and strengthened the coordination and leadership of early years provision. It has also recognised there is further work to do to improve the quality of secondary schools and reduce the number of primary schools not meeting the expected standards, and has put in place a number of initiatives to address this and to ensure consistency in leadership and management in schools. However, there is further work to do to improve the quality of secondary schools and reduce the number of primary schools not meeting the expected standards.

This children's services assessment is provided in accordance with section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager, Children's Services Assessment