

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 40 40 40  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 945 6293  
Direct F 0117 945 6554  
[South\\_apa@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:South_apa@ofsted.gov.uk)



26 November 2007

Mr Robert Back  
Director of Children's Services  
West Sussex County Council  
County Hall  
West Street  
Chichester  
West Sussex  
PO19 1RF

Dear Mr Back

## **2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN WEST SUSSEX COUNTY 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 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**

West Sussex County Council delivers services for children and young people at a good level overall. There have been significant improvements in education over the past year, particularly with GCSE results. Following last year's annual performance assessment (APA), there has been an appropriate restructuring of some key services surrounding children and young people's health, the formulation of a unified service for all matters concerning children in care, and a renewed anti-bullying strategy. Good partnerships with external bodies such as the Learning and Skills Council, the Primary Care Trust, and the Home Office continue to benefit young people in the County, and the authority is making very good progress in establishing the Children's Trust. However, whilst a number of key social care indicators have shown improvement on last year's figures there remains more to be done, particularly in the staying safe aspect and with some outcomes for more vulnerable young people.

## Being healthy

Grade 3

### Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for the health of children and young people is good. Health and council staff work well together to identify need, and achieve effectively integrated universal and targeted services to promote the health of children. Some service inequalities across the authority, for example, in the health of children looked after, have been tackled successfully by capitalising on restructuring within the National Health Service, which created a single Primary Care Trust for the county. The percentage of children in the care of the authority who had annual health and dental checks is very good, above both national and similar authority figures. Health outcomes for children and young people generally in West Sussex are better than national averages. Innovative joint working has led to particularly good performance for breast-feeding, and a reduction in the numbers of expectant mothers who smoke. The number of teenage conceptions showed a slight rise last year but remains below that of comparator authorities and significantly below the national average. Good and increasing support is offered to parents through the Joint Access Teams (for which the council was awarded Beacon status) and the developing Integrated Service Delivery Areas (ISDAs). These programmes have given priority to children and young people in the most deprived areas of the authority.

The Tellus2 survey of young people's views and the council's own surveys indicate that young people in West Sussex have generally healthier lifestyles than the national average and are content with the standard of advice available. Such surveys inform strong programmes of health, sex and relationship education for young people which are reviewed regularly. Current work with Key Stage 4 children is informing national developments. The council exceeded its own modest target for Healthy Schools status last year but knows that it needs to involve more schools and increase the accreditation rate in order to meet the national target.

Progress towards a comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is good. Improvements have been sustained and built upon. All service extension targets have been met. Access, provision and choice are extended. Targeted services for vulnerable groups are provided through integrated teams. The service is rated as good, meeting the national average for progress towards a comprehensive service. Whilst overall waiting times for treatment were not as good as national averages, figures for the last quarter of the year indicated that improved outcomes were being achieved. The physical and mental health needs of children and young people in the care of the authority are well met through a multi-disciplinary specialist health team. Health outcomes for these young people continue to be better than the national average and continue to improve.

## Areas for development

- Continue to reduce the waiting times for CAMHS services so that they are at least in line with national averages.
- Increase the rate of achievement of Healthy School status so as to meet the national target.

## Staying safe

Grade 2

### Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. Whilst there have been improvements in some key indicators, overall performance remains adequate. Responses of children in the Tellus2 survey indicate that they feel safe. There has been a reduction of incidents in primary school playgrounds and a good performance in reducing road accidents in line with national targets.

Evidence of the increasingly effective preventative and support services is found in the declining number of referrals which is now below the national average. However, the previous improvement in the number of these referrals that are assessed in a timely manner has not been maintained during this period and performance is now below the national average for both initial and core assessments. All children with a child protection plan are allocated a suitably qualified social worker and their reviews are held in a timely manner, meeting the national average performance. Whilst numbers of registered children continue to decline and fewer are registered than the national average, re-registrations remain higher than the national average.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) was established on time, is proactive and is successfully meeting its wider safeguarding brief. It has effective links with neighbouring Boards. The council is making a significant contribution to the national strategy for identifying and protecting vulnerable children and young people entering the country through groundbreaking multi-disciplinary work at Gatwick airport. It has also successfully influenced national policy in respect of children in families awaiting deportation. The Board has established effective procedures for conduct of and implementation of learning from serious case reviews and audit of work quality.

Members have established a new anti-bullying task force which has led to a revised strategy for imminent implementation across the authority. This strategy has identified the need for renewed training across all council and partner services, and improvements in monitoring and reporting bullying.

The number of children in the care of the authority remains lower than the national figure. The number of these who have an allocated social worker has improved to 89% but remains below the national average. The timeliness of their case reviews has also improved but at 60% this also remains well below the national average. Stability of placements is good, and adoption figures are better than the national

average. However, there is a higher proportion of residential placements than average and higher than national average placement unit cost.

### **Areas for development**

- Ensure the successful implementation of the revised anti-bullying strategy to include training for all relevant authority and partner staff, and comprehensive incident reporting and monitoring mechanisms across the county.
- Ensure that all initial and core assessments are carried out within an appropriate timescale.
- Ensure that all children in care have an appropriately qualified social worker, and that their case reviews are carried out on time.

## **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. Standards at Key Stage 1 continue to be better than in similar authorities in reading, writing, and mathematics. Standards at Key Stage 2 have improved in English and science and are better than in similar authorities; whilst standards in mathematics have also improved they remain just below those of statistical neighbours. Standards in Key Stage 3 remain good; they are above those of similar authorities in English, mathematics and science, and value-added measures confirm that young people make particularly good progress during Key Stage 3. After several years of static performance, GCSE results showed a significant improvement in 2006, when the percentage of students achieving five A\*-C grades was 60%. Whilst this figure was just below the 61% of similar authorities, the 49% of students achieving five A\*-C grades including English and mathematics was better than the 48% in similar authorities and the national figure of 45%, which is another improvement on the previous year's figures. The percentage of children looked after that achieved at least one GCSE was higher than in similar authorities or nationally. The performance of minority ethnic groups at GCSE was variable in 2006. Some groups performed well in comparison with national figures, but there are a few groups where performance could be improved, particularly Bangladeshi students. Overall, value-added measures between Key Stage 2 and GCSE are above the national average although there remains a wide variation between some schools, which the local authority is challenging through direct intervention through its well-established School Improvement Partner (SIP) programme.

Children in West Sussex get a good start to their education, and the majority of early years settings are given good or outstanding grades when inspected by Ofsted. Similarly, the overall effectiveness of the majority of primary and secondary schools inspected by Ofsted was judged to be good or better. The proportion of schools requiring special measures since September 2005 was slightly higher than the

national figure, although the number being issued with a notice to improve was lower, particularly in primary schools. The authority has robust procedures to identify, challenge and support schools that require improvement and has intervened effectively to secure better performance, particularly in Key Stage 4.

Behaviour is good or better in almost all primary schools and in the large majority of secondary schools. Attendance is above the national averages in both primary and secondary schools, although there is a higher proportion of authorised absence in secondary schools than found nationally. Exclusions in secondary schools have increased and, in particular, the number of young people being permanently excluded is significantly higher than the national average. Whilst between six and 19 hours a week of alternative educational provision is made for young people who have been permanently excluded from school, the number receiving over 20 hours of provision each week was significantly below the average in similar authorities and was amongst the lowest nationally in 2005. Whilst improving, this provision remains currently inadequate. The authority is fully aware of this and has plans to extend alternative provision, particularly through pupil referral units. As well as reducing the overall number of young people being permanently excluded, particularly from secondary schools, the authority must increase the amount of their alternative educational support and provision as an important priority.

The majority of children and young people surveyed through the Tellus2 survey said that they enjoyed school, and that they were happy with the range of activities and opportunities that were provided for them out of school hours. The council's "3-in-1" card enables young people to access discounted travel and a range of activities, and encourages their independent participation in a range of educational and social activities. Progress has been made on the provision of Personal Education Plans for children and young people in care; by the end of the APA year, these were in place for most, but not all. It is now a key priority to ensure that, in partnership with schools, these plans are in place and working effectively for every child who is in care, to maximise their chances of success and enjoyment at school. Similarly, whilst the percentage of new statements of special educational needs issued within acceptable timescales is improving, these figures are still too low and are below those for similar authorities.

### **Areas for development**

- Ensure that Personal Education Plans are in place and are working effectively for all children who are looked after.
- Reduce the number of permanent exclusions in secondary schools and increase the amount of alternative educational provision made for young people who have been permanently excluded from school.

## 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. In Ofsted inspections of early years settings, and of primary and secondary schools, the number of good or outstanding judgements for making a positive contribution was considerably above the figure for similar authorities. The authority continues to engage well with children and young people, with the active involvement of the Youth Cabinet in strategic and decision-making processes at the highest level. The authority continues to hold Beacon Council status for the Positive Engagement of Young People. The Tellus2 survey indicated that a greater proportion of young people in this authority have participated in a youth council or parliament than is the case nationally. They are kept very well informed about opportunities and matters that concern them, particularly through the County Council's website pages for children and young people. The percentage of young people that participate in publicly funded youth services is above the national average, and is exceeding the national target. As a result of a key area for improvement in the 2006 APA, the authority has formed a planning group to improve its strategies for supporting the transition of young people with disabilities into adulthood, again through a focused multi-agency approach. This includes particularly good partnerships work with Connexions. Pilot work has been done to test out this group's proposals and to allocate lead professionals to young people going through the transition process. Since the last APA, there has been an improvement in the numbers of young people leaving the care of the authority who have pathway plans, although again there is room for further improvement.

Whilst youth offending rates continue to reduce over time, and are in line with neighbouring authorities, the number of first-time entrants to the Youth Justice System fell considerably in the last half of 2006 to a figure well below that of similar authorities, which is good progress. Recidivism rates for the 2002 and 2003 cohorts are below those for similar authorities and nationally and this is a good improvement from the 2001 cohort. Although the authority now has a strategy group in place working to improve the rate of final warnings and convictions of children in care, with dedicated managers linked to children's homes, the number of convictions and final warnings given to children-in-care over the same period increased slightly but remains broadly acceptable.

As part of a national pilot scheme, young people from other areas are independently inspecting West Sussex services for children in care. The involvement of looked after children in their statutory reviews remains below the figures for similar authorities and nationally. However, this involvement is increasing and the introduction of an advocacy service, and officers and elected members, as corporate parents, adopting "champion" roles for individual children is having a beneficial effect.

## Areas for development

- Increase the participation of children and young people who are looked after in their statutory case reviews.
- Further improve the number of young people leaving the care of the authority who have agreed pathway plans.

## 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 a good and varied range of early years provision that meets the needs of children and their parents. The number of young people who are not in education, employment or training is low, and below the average both nationally and for similar authorities. The number of young people in, or having left, care who are engaged in education, employment or training is much improved and is now good, as are the numbers of teenage mothers and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Detailed information about the participation of young people from minority ethnic groups in education, employment or training is not available; the varied achievement of these groups at GCSE together with the indication given by the authority that numbers of these students are increasing, particularly with young people from other European countries, suggests that more could be done to analyse trends and provide targeted support where it is needed. A key area for improvement in the last annual performance assessment was to improve the provision of suitable housing for young people leaving the care of the authority. This has improved over the past year, but the figures are still below those for similar authorities and nationally, and so this remains an important area for improvement.

Good progress continues to be made towards the implementation of the 14-19 education strategy, through particularly good links with the local Learning and Skills Council. A more relevant and personalised approach to curriculum development is starting to have an impact on GCSE results, and plans are in place to establish three academies in the authority. Achievement and standards in school sixth forms is variable; standards are in line with similar authorities, although students do not take as many qualifications as those in similar schools elsewhere. However, across the authority, young people attending all schools and colleges achieved higher rates of Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications than those in similar authorities or nationally. A higher than average number of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are encouraged to participate in work-based learning, although the success rate for these young people is slightly below the national average, as it is for all young people participating in work-based learning generally.

## Areas for development

- Analyse the participation of young people from minority ethnic groups in education, employment or training, and identify if and where support is needed to increase their participation.
- Continue to improve housing provision for young people leaving the care of the authority.

## 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. Clear leadership and vision continues to be given by the Director of Children's Services, Members, and Lead Officers, with equally clear prioritisation and determination to improve outcomes for children and young people. The authority has an honest and realistic understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and has worked effectively and boldly over the past year to restructure services in a way that it believes will further improve outcomes for young people in West Sussex. There are strong partnerships with other agencies leading to continued excellent progress on 14-19 developments, performance improvements in the CAMHS, and the establishment of the LSCB. The Gatwick Airport project, in partnership with the Home Office and Barnardo's, is making an important difference to the lives of some young people newly arrived in the UK. Children's Trust developments in West Sussex are exciting and progressing well. Integrated Service Delivery Areas (ISDAs) are developing out of the Joint Action Team (JAT) development over the past few years. Many of these new structures and strategies are addressing key issues for improvement in the 2005 joint area review and the 2006 APA. For example, the new Children-in-Care Service will provide a single focus point to coordinate all aspects of provision for these young people and respond to their needs. Nevertheless, whilst there have been improvements in many key indicators since the last APA, there are still a small number of areas where more improvement is needed.

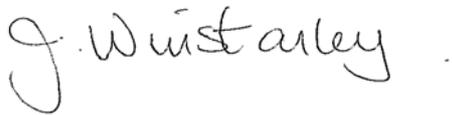
Financial services are well managed. The total Personal Social Services budget is in line with that of similar authorities, and the percentage of this that is spent on provision for children and families is above that of similar authorities, and an improvement on the previous year. There have been improvements in the recruitment and retention of social care workers, and agency use is reduced. Good assistant care managers are covering a wider range of work, but the increase in the number of children in the care of the authority means that continued pressures on staffing resources remain. Overall, however, the authority gives good value for money.

### Area for development

- Ensure that the Integrated Children's System and the new Children-in-Care Service further improve key outcomes for young people, in particular through their increased participation in their case reviews, increased family placements and placement choice, and improved access to suitable housing when they leave the care of the authority.

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

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

Juliet Winstanley  
Divisional Manager  
Local Services Inspection