

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



Making Social Care
Better for People



Ms Lisa Christensen
Director of Children's Services
Norfolk County Council
Martineau Lane
Norwich
NR1 2DH

01 November 2006

Dear Ms Christensen

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment (APA) 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 awarded ¹
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	3

1

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

The new service, which amalgamated education and social care, is good and continues to make improvements to the provision for children and young people. Very good leadership is provided by the new Director of Children's Services who has been in post since April 2005. All senior managers have recently taken up their posts. Over the last year the authority has successfully managed significant budget difficulties.

The authority has given excellent support to schools in special measures and the percentage of schools causing concern has fallen significantly to below the national average. Achievement in schools varies across the different key stages; however the authority is fully aware of the under-achievement that needs to be addressed and is working effectively with schools to raise standards.

Norfolk has a very good youth offending team (YOT), youth service, adoption and fostering service and its own residential services. Good progress has been made in developing services for the reduction of teenage pregnancies, reduction of substance misuse, and management of looked after children. Areas for improvement are the provision of a full range of children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and the high costs of services. The authority is developing preventative services to reduce unit costs and the number of looked after children.

Special mention should be made of the 50% significant reduction in deaths and serious injuries to young people for which the authority received Beacon Status. Beacon Status was also achieved for involving and consulting young people.

The authority has made good progress in tackling most of the areas for improvement identified last year.

Being healthy

The contribution of the authority to being healthy is good, and shows continued and sustained improvement from last year.

School inspection judgements show that health awareness is promoted positively by encouraging healthy eating and by ensuring regular access to sport and exercise. Three quarters of young people now participate in two or more hours of sport each week. Nearly all primary schools are taking part in the five a day fruit and vegetable scheme and just under a quarter of schools have achieved Healthy School Status. As in previous years the health of looked after children is good.

CAMHS does not yet provide a full range of services, but is making satisfactory progress. A 24-hour service is due to be in place by January 2007. Good partnership arrangements ensure that young people with complex needs are supported appropriately and quickly. The YOT has seconded mental health care professionals ensuring quick referral and action. The reduction in substance misuse service acts promptly and works effectively with different organisations. However, the number of young people who receive help from this service remains low and the authority needs to ensure the service is easily accessible and information is readily available.

The number of teenage pregnancies continues to be reduced and the good practice in Great Yarmouth is being rolled out across the county. Other work to continue this downward trend includes an improved relationship with the Primary Care Trust (PCT) in Norwich, targeting specific parts of the county and focusing on young men. Local figures suggest the authority has achieved the Local Public Service Agreement target of a 15% drop in the number of teenage pregnancies.

Staying safe

The contribution of the authority to staying safe is good and significant progress has been made in nearly all performance indicators. There is now a real understanding of this area, which has been enhanced by research conducted by the University of East Anglia. The new department and structure have created an improved performance culture and enhanced the working relationships with YOT, the youth service, the health service and the voluntary and private sector.

The structure of the new department enables it to identify children in need at an earlier stage. Schools have a better understanding of looked after children and considerable work has been done to reduce absences and improve the outcomes of education for looked after children. The new structure ensures looked after children have consistent and relevant relationships with the council and has significantly increased effective liaison between departments. This has improved stability and educational outcomes. There are fewer absences from school and more timely reviews and assessments.

The number of looked after children is below the national average. For the first time, this year the authority has significantly increased the amount of money spent on preventative services. Preventative services are key to reducing costs in the longer term, and in reducing the number of looked after children. This is a suitably high priority for the authority and is identified in the children and young peoples plan and the local area agreement.

Registrations, de-registrations and re-registrations on the Child Protection Register remain higher than in similar authorities but lower than national averages. The authority has good plans in place to reduce the number on the Child Protection Register.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution the authority makes to ensuring children and young people achieve at school and enjoy their education and leisure activities is good overall. However, there remain some areas where less progress has been made.

Standards are good in Early Years and Key Stage 1. Good progress was achieved in Key Stage 2 in 2005 in English and science. However, progress in mathematics and overall standards at Key Stage 2 are still below national averages. Pupils make good progress through Key Stage 3 and achieve standards broadly in line with national averages. This progress is not maintained in Key Stage 4 and the overall attainment of pupils, as seen in

the percentage of pupils achieving at least five A* to C grades at GCSE, is below national averages.

School inspections indicate that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities generally make good progress in primary schools and satisfactory progress in secondary schools. The issue of statements for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities within 18 weeks improved significantly in 2005. The level of educational qualifications of looked after children increased in 2005/06 and is good. However, the percentage of young people leaving care aged 16 or over with five or more GCSEs at grade A* to C or a GNVQ is significantly lower than the national average.

Attendance has improved overall, particularly in primary schools where it is now in line with national averages. The attendance of looked after children improved significantly last year. Fewer pupils were excluded. However, attendance in secondary schools is still below the national average largely as a result of high authorised absences. The authority has instigated some imaginative actions to improve attendance including using the local press to highlight the importance of attending school.

The authority has given excellent support to schools in special measures and the percentage of schools causing concern has fallen significantly to below the national average. Good support to schools has led to improved leadership and management and improved quality of teaching and learning. Good analysis of attainment has led to effective interventions in selected schools. However, these effective interventions have yet to be disseminated across the county.

Good curriculum developments are improving the quality of learning for pupils, for example the music programme in Key Stage 2 and the study support. However, the analysis of attendance at enrichment activities is at too early a stage to be able to confirm that all pupils are benefiting from these experiences. Good recreational opportunities are supported very well by the youth service. The number of young people involved increased significantly in 2004 and exceeded the national target. The youth service has significantly passed the threshold for providing leisure services to young people nationally. This has been achieved with a high ratio of young people to youth workers, demonstrating good value for money.

There is a lack of consistent alternative educational provision for children who do not attend school, for example the 20-hour provision is still not available for all those who need it.

Making a positive contribution

The contribution the authority makes to ensuring that children and young people make a positive contribution is excellent. The involvement of children and young people in decision-making by the authority is outstanding. Learners made a significant contribution to the production of the Children and Young People Plan (CYPP) which includes good evaluation and clear priorities. Norfolk has received Beacon Status for positive youth engagement. Schools support learners well in helping them make a positive contribution to

the school and the community. Some school councils are providing outstanding support for school improvement, for example by helping to appoint staff, taking forward their own initiatives and raising funds for charities. The authority is encouraging all schools to maximise the contribution of the pupils to school improvement through the development of effective school councils. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are included in the excellent involvement of all learners in the decision-making process.

The YOT is performing well and contributed significantly to Norfolk achieving Beacon Status. There has been an overall reduction in first time offenders and potential offenders have been targeted. The number of looked after children receiving final warnings and convictions has significantly reduced to the lowest rate in five years. The participation of looked after children in reviews is good.

Achieving economic well-being

The contribution the authority makes to ensuring children and young people achieve economic well-being is good overall. However, there remain some areas where less progress has been made.

Attainment in General Certificate of Education (GCE), A level and Vocational Certificate of Education programmes is improving but is still below that in similar authorities and the national average. The authority is fully aware of previous underachievement and is working with schools to raise standards. One of the main challenges has been in raising the aspirations of head teachers and staff in some schools. There has also been a reluctance of schools to encourage students to take more relevant courses e.g. vocational based courses rather than GCE. As a consequence the quality of provision post-16 is not yet consistent across the county. However, detailed analysis of attainment has been completed and several initiatives are being developed to increase attainment.

A curriculum mapping exercise has been completed involving schools, colleges, employers and council members. As a result, more joint courses are being developed and effective 14–19 networks are being built between schools. The authority is developing provision around hubs of schools and colleges.

Inspections indicate that schools are generally good at helping learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being. These skills are further developed through an extensive range of well-conceived and effective regeneration projects, for example supporting pupils who would normally be excluded through a curriculum based on a radio station. This range of provision is to be extended further with increased funds over the next two years.

The percentage of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) is slightly below the national figure. Significant improvement has been made from last year with the education, employment and training of care leavers, although this remains still below national averages. The number of care leavers attending university is considerably higher than the national average. The percentage of care leavers at age 19 who are living

in suitable accommodation has increased significantly this year and is good. Further improvement is forecasted for 2006/07. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are being helped to achieve economic well-being. The authority is completing its review of achievement of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and is aware that more information is needed.

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

The newly structured department is already demonstrating improved outcomes in most areas for young people. Service provision is good, particularly the youth service, the youth offending team, residential services, the teenage pregnancy reduction team, the substance misuse reduction team and the fostering and adoption service. The organisation has achieved Beacon Status for road accident reduction and young people involvement.

Unit costs in Norfolk are high. This year the authority has increased the number of in county services and development costs have increased unit costs. In addition, there has been a significant increase in preventative expenditure which is now just below that in similar authorities. The authority sensibly asked the Audit Commission to look at these issues and their recommendations are being implemented. In a difficult financial year the department has come in on budget because of improved budget management. Good plans are in place to reduce unit costs.

There has been reduced staff turnover, with fewer vacant posts and less staff sickness during the year, showing better staffing stability than in similar authorities. This is in a year of reorganisation and the introduction of new structures, which shows that the service has been well managed with good leadership and a clear vision. The authority is aware that the five new area directors have a key role to play in the continued success of the work of the authority, and is clear about the need to roll out improvements consistently across the areas.

Although the amount of training for staff is less than in comparable authorities, it has significantly improved over the last year and the budget has been significantly increased. Staff in residential services are well trained and more have appropriate qualifications than in similar authorities.

The Children and Young People's Plan and the Local Area Agreements have clearly identified areas for development, setting clear outcome targets. In many areas good progress has already been made.

Taken together, these features provide firm evidence of a well managed service with good capacity to improve further.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health of looked after children • encouragement of healthy lifestyles in schools • reduction in teenage pregnancies. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing an easily accessible 24-hour CAMHS service.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stability for looked after children • timely assessments • reviews on Child Protection Register • good working relationships with YOT the youth service, the health service and the voluntary and private sector. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing the number of looked after children • reducing the number of young people on the Child Protection Register.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very good support for schools particularly those in special measures • good Early Years and Key Stage 1 provision and good progress in Key Stage 3 • good analysis of assessment data leading to effective interventions • improved educational outcomes for looked after children. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standards in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 • increasing attendance, particularly in secondary schools • ensuring consistency of alternative educational provision • disseminating effective intervention strategies to the rest of the county.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • excellent involvement of learners in decision-making processes • outstanding contribution of some school councils • good performance of youth offending team • significantly reduced number of looked after children receiving final warnings and convictions. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continue to develop the role of school councils in all schools.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved networks between schools and colleges • effective regeneration projects • improved accommodation for care leavers at 19. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attainment of students post-16 • consistency of post-16 provision across the county • better information on achievement of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good quality in-house provision of services • good staff retention with low vacancy and sickness levels • good budget management • increased budget for preventative services. 	<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction in unit costs.
--	---

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

- The number of looked after children.
- The number of young people on the Child Protection Register.
- The development of preventative services.
- Unit costs of services for young people.
- Attainment in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4.
- Attendance, particularly in secondary schools.
- Impact of the area directors on ensuring consistency of provision across the county.

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 and will be published to the Audit Commission. The social care judgement is for CSCI information only.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

Divisional Manager
 Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS

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