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Ms Frankie Sulke
Executive Director Children and Young People
London Borough of Lewisham
3rd Floor, Laurence House
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Dear Ms Sulke

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment for your local authority, some aspects of which were conducted at the same time as the analysis stage of the joint area review. The 2006 annual performance assessment informed the scoping of the joint area review at the planning stage. The initial findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment were taken into account by the review team at the end of the analysis stage. The outcomes of the joint area review were then considered alongside a review of recent data in arriving at the final annual performance assessment judgements for 2007. Many of the areas for development highlighted in this letter align with the recommendations in the joint area review and should be similarly aligned in any future action plan produced by the council and its partners. The judgements in the letter also draw on your assessment of progress or review of the Children and Young People's Plan where it was available, and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted and other inspectorates. We are grateful for the information you provided to support this and for the time given by you and your colleagues to the assessment process.

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 3

Lewisham council delivers services that are good overall with some aspects of its work outstanding. Outcomes are improved in many areas. Effective partnerships and shared vision provide an effective service to children and young people within the borough. Together, children's services are making a number of significant contributions to improving the achievement and well-being of children and young people within an area of London that faces significant social deprivation and economic challenges. However, arrangements for audit in some aspects of social care were found by the joint area review to be insufficiently developed to address all practice issues, although work to address this by the council is well underway.

Being healthy

Grade 3

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 good. The impact of health inequalities through low birth weight and immunisation and vaccination rates is being successfully addressed, with challenging targets set for further improvement. Teenage conception rates amongst 15- to 17-year-olds have decreased in line with national rates with a wide range of preventative and support services in place. The challenging local public service agreement targets have not yet been reached but current data indicates that they will be met in the required timescale. A good range of accessible, specialist sexual health advice services are available and sexually transmitted infections among young people are decreasing faster than similar comparators.

There is a strong focus on promoting health in the authority's schools and the development of co-located, integrated services. Inspection evidence confirms that nine out of ten schools are good or better at promoting a healthy lifestyle among children and young people. The children's centre programme is progressing well with six centres opened in areas of greatest need in Lewisham.

There is a good focus on improving health outcomes for looked after children and young people, with dedicated staff and services in place. A good number of looked after children and young people receive annual health assessments although this has fallen this year to below the national average. The local authority has appointed an additional nurse and increased monitoring by managers to improve performance.

Agencies are working well to promote mental health and reduce substance misuse. A fully comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) strategy is in place, including services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those being looked after. The targeting of specific support in three secondary schools by CAMHS is a good feature. All assessments for substance misuse are completed on time. However, only a third of those looked after children and young people with an identified problem seek further treatment for substance misuse. The recent establishment of a specific clinic for these vulnerable young people, and the appointment of an extra nurse, is increasing the numbers seeking more help.

Area for development

- Increase the number of annual health assessments for looked after children and young people.

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. There is a strong commitment to multi-agency working, effective preventative work and good early support. The recent joint area review judged that systems for auditing practice in social care did not adequately address all areas of practice. However, the authority has responded rapidly by introducing comprehensive quality audit procedures and processes to monitor the progress of individual cases. The impact of these changes is yet to be fully realised in better outcomes for children and young people.

The council has worked well with partners to improve community and personal safety in the borough. The young residents' survey showed a 5% reduction in the proportion of people concerned about bullying. School inspections confirm a good level of understanding and confidence in the management of such incidents in schools. Anti-bullying guidelines for all agencies and a racist incidents policy for schools have been published and provide clear guidance for staff in tackling issues.

A good range of family support services is in place to support children and their families in need. The council has opened the Kaleidoscope Centre this year, funded jointly with the Primary Care Trust. This effectively brings together health and social care services for vulnerable children and young people and their families while also providing further opportunities for joint working.

The local authority is making an adequate contribution to safeguarding children and young people. All children and young people on the Child Protection Register have an allocated qualified social worker. A reduction in the number of children and young people on the Child Protection Register has been achieved to levels comparable with similar authorities but above the national average. The timeliness of initial and core assessments are better than that seen nationally. However, the number of repeat referrals has increased to above national average. The proportion of child protection investigations which led to initial child protection conferences and were completed on time is well below similar authorities. The joint area review identified that practice audit systems are not understood or embedded well enough and have failed to tackle some weaker performance. Recently introduced practice audit procedures have greatly increased the level of management oversight and performance monitoring of social workers. Recent evaluation has shown that the new system is having a positive impact on staff and managers in ensuring that children and young people on the Child Protection Register are visited on time and that their plans are regularly reviewed.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board has been successfully established with full endorsement from all partner agencies, although it is at an early stage in leading the safeguarding agenda within the authority. Quality assurance processes are still developing and there are no arrangements for regular audit of case work. There has

been a good multi agency approach to preventing and responding to domestic violence, but the local authority recognises that more still needs to be done. Action plans from serious case reviews are monitored and implemented well.

Development of the common assessment framework is good with full implementation expected by April 2008. Implementation of the information sharing and assessment index has progressed well with many core staff trained in its use.

The proportion of looked after children and young people continues to fall at a faster rate than similar comparators through effective preventative measures and services. Outcomes are generally good and better than local comparators but still below the national average. The number of looked after children and young people allocated to a social worker is above the national average. The timeliness of reviews is better than that seen nationally but overall performance is just below that of similar authorities. Independent reviewing officers provide effective support. More looked after children and young people are being placed locally within the authority's strengthening 'Special Guardianship' programme to effectively meet the needs of these young people. However, the proportion placed in foster placements or for adoption has fallen and is below the national average. Residential care placements have decreased but are above similar authorities and the number of adoptions has fallen but remains good. The stability of placements for those experiencing three or more placements during the year is very good. Longer term stability has also improved but is below the national average. The joint area review found that many care leavers are prepared well for independence.

The council is making good progress to enable children and young people with disabilities to live in safe environments and make a smooth transition to adult services. The proportion of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who have transition plans in place increased to over 90 per cent in 2006-07. Specific arrangements to safeguard children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are in place. All child protection investigations are carried out by staff in the disability team with experience and skills in communicating with these children and young people.

Areas for development

- Continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the new practice audit arrangements for all staff working with children and young people on the Child Protection Register to ensure compliance.
- Reduce the proportion of children and young people in residential care
- Improve long-term stability for looked after children and young people.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

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 good. Further increases have been achieved in the number of childcare providers and places available to levels above that seen nationally. Effective support at registration has reduced the proportion of providers with actions but numbers still remain above the national average and that of statistical neighbours. Inspectors judge the quality of childcare and nursery provision as generally good or satisfactory, with a minority judged to be inadequate. The authority is very quick to take action in such cases with carefully targeted support. The number of childcare places for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has been increased.

Children begin their schooling in the Foundation Stage with levels of attainment at below expected levels. This is especially so in communication, language and literacy skills and mathematical development where attainment is well below expected levels. Attainment at Key Stage 1 is well below average but results generally indicate improvement consistent with national trends. Achievement has been satisfactory in literacy and numeracy skills. The local authority has been particularly successful in tackling the underachievement of boys and those of Black Caribbean origin with considerable improvements made during 2006-07. Good work in basic skills is effectively built on in Key Stage 2 to obtain results that are average in English but below average in mathematics and science. However, a steady upward trend has been sustained in both of these subjects, consistent with that found nationally, with improvements supported by better results in 2007, which are yet to be validated.

This trend of good improvement is broadly maintained throughout Key Stages 3 and 4 where the proportion of young people who gain five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C in 2006, although slightly below the national average, is above that of statistical neighbours. In fact, Lewisham is the most improved borough in London at five A* to C over three years and the 4th most improved nationally in 2006. Standards in maths and science at Key Stages 3 and 4 remain below average but equal to that of other similar authorities. However, the proportion of learners achieving at least one GCSE in 2006 is above the national average and that of statistical neighbours, representing significant progress on the previous year's results. Very positive value-added indicators place the local authority in the top quartile and confirm this very good achievement.

The effective application of the primary and secondary strategies continues to have a positive impact on standards. Very effective procedures and systems exist to collect and analyse data related to the achievements of children and young people. The Boys and Writing project within the Lewisham primary writing strategy has contributed effectively to raising standards in this area and the very good achievement of Black Caribbean boys in particular. Very effective levels of support

have been provided to one primary and one secondary school issued with notices to improve, resulting in better outcomes for children and young people in these schools.

Inspection evidence and the most recent Tellus2 survey results confirm that most children and young people enjoy being at school and demonstrate a very positive attitude towards learning. Attendance in primary and secondary schools remains broadly average with signs of good improvement. However, the level of unauthorised absence remains well above the national average. In contrast, reductions in both the fixed term and permanent exclusion of pupils have been achieved to levels below national and local comparators. Although the number of boys excluded on a fixed term basis has fallen, it has risen for girls, with black pupils twice as likely to be excluded as white pupils at secondary school. However, the newly introduced restorative justice programme has successfully reduced the number of fixed term exclusions of Black Caribbean boys. Good provision is made for excluded pupils to receive appropriate full-time tuition with effective reintegration programmes in place.

The number of looked after children and young people who left care with at least one GCSE or equivalent qualification has increased, with 15% achieving at least five GCSEs at grades A* to C in 2006. Despite further improvements in 2007, the overall attainment and rates of achievement across each key stage remain low and improving educational outcomes for these young people remains a key priority within the Children and Young People's Plan for 2007-09. The provision of free access to the local authority's leisure facilities for looked after children and young people is a good feature.

The proportion of children and young people with statements of special educational needs is higher than the national average. Inspection evidence confirms that the achievement of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good in most schools as a result of good provision and carefully targeted support. Funding is being delegated to schools to commission services. Four special schools inspected by Ofsted this year were graded as good with outstanding features. Although provision for gifted and talented children and young people is generally effective, the local authority has identified this as an area for further development.

Areas for development

- Raise standards in mathematics and science equal to that seen in English at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.
- Reduce the levels of unauthorised absence in schools.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 4

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services in this aspect is outstanding and is having a very significant impact on improving outcomes for children and young people. The local authority actively seeks the views of children and young people. It continues to

build on the excellent achievements recognised by its Beacon Status in this aspect of its work. The latest Audit Commission survey confirms that schools are overwhelmingly supportive of the authority's drive to involve children and young people in decisions that affect their lives. Citizenship skills are consolidated very effectively through school council activity, the activities of the young citizen's panel and the election of a young mayor when nearly half of children and young people in the authority participated in the election. An increased number of volunteers support the youth service programme and the number of young people using its services is equal to that found nationally. Channels for seeking the views of children and young people are very clear. A very good emphasis is placed on the involvement of vulnerable children and young people including looked after children and young people, care leavers and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The local authority has been effective in increasing the number of looked after children and young people participating in their statutory reviews this year to national levels.

The rates of first time offenders to the Youth Justice system and those who re-offend have continued to fall below the national average and that of statistical neighbours. Offending by looked after children and young people has also declined. The local authority is effectively reducing the numbers of young people coming to the attention of the Youth Justice system to levels below the national average and similar comparators using strategies such as effectively targeting the achievement of Black young people, the application of a very innovative restorative justice system in schools and the recent development of two Youth Inclusion Support Panels (YISPs).

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 4

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 outstanding. The provision for 14 to 19 year olds is very good and the proportion of young people progressing to higher education or training is above the national average and increasing. An ever increasing number of vocational courses are available to young people in a range of settings of which Lewisham College is a centre of excellence. The local authority has worked effectively in partnership with the range of post-16 providers to increase the average points score for learners taking GCE A-level to just below the national average.

The local authority's innovative 14–19 strategy effectively involves a wide range of providers in implementing its three-year learner entitlement action plan. Diplomas in information and communications technology and creative and media are scheduled to begin in 2008 and 2009 respectively. Initiatives such as Making the Grade and Youth Graduate programme have resulted in the number of Black Caribbean young people gaining entrance to university reflecting national demographic proportions and are above similar comparators. The numbers of young people participating in work-based training continues to rise and is now close to the national average.

Effective strategies are in place to reduce the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training. The proportion has fallen to below national levels with the rate of those entering further education, employment or training nearly twice that seen nationally. There has been sustained improvement in the level of high quality childcare available to those seeking further education, employment and/or training and resources are used very well to support lone parents.

Support for looked after young people is highly effective and as a result of the local authority's action outcomes for this vulnerable group continue to improve rapidly. However, the proportion who leave education at 16 years of age with no qualification is still high. The number in education, employment or training at 19 years of age is above the national average. The number of those living in suitable accommodation is equivalent to that found nationally. Inter-agency collaboration to support this vulnerable group of young people is very good.

The number of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in education, training or employment has further increased at a rate faster than other local comparators, but overall success rates are below the national average. However, links with Connexions work well and the proportion of these vulnerable young people not in education, employment or training is declining while work-based training continues to rise.

Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people

Grade 4

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The local authority demonstrates outstanding capacity to build on the continued good progress made in the integration of children's services and provides excellent value for money. Children and young people are at the centre of the Children and Young People's Plan and the partnership's decision-making processes. This plan communicates very effectively the local authority's ambition to improve the lives and life chances of children, young people and their families. The authority's self-assessment demonstrates a very clear understanding of strengths and areas for improvement within children's services. An evidence based approach has been used very effectively to review the comprehensive Children and Young People's Plan, measure its success and identify areas for further improvement.

Leadership is strong and dynamic. Senior managers strive to ensure that outcomes meet or exceed the challenging targets set. Prioritisation is excellent. Objectives are very well constructed across the five *Every child matters* outcomes with appropriate financial management and alignment of resources against these priorities. A good example of this approach is the significant progress made by the local authority in lifting attainment levels of some under-achieving and challenging groups, such as black Caribbean boys, closer to the national averages. The recent joint area review found that practice audit systems are currently insufficiently robust to ensure the effective tracking of provision within children's social care. The senior managers have

responded rapidly to this issue with the implementation of comprehensive quality assurance procedures to improve staff performance and outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

Partnership working has been further strengthened through the development of joint commissioning priorities and a shared approach to asset management, capital development and sharing of information. For example, the establishment of the Kaleidoscope Centre is creating additional opportunities for multi-agency approach to those working with vulnerable children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

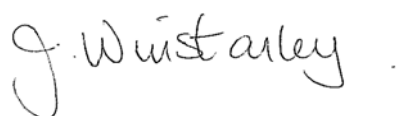
A robust culture of performance management is firmly established with monitoring taking place at all levels of the directorate. Managers continue to implement effective strategies that improve the efficiency of the local authority and its children's services. Considerable reductions have been achieved in the use of agency staff working in social services. The number of vacancies in social care posts has continued to fall close to national averages but recruitment continues to remain a challenge.

Areas for development

- Take steps to fully implement the practice audit systems within children's social care.
- Reduce the number of social care vacancies.

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 "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection