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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Ms Sulke

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment 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 awarded¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The authority's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	4
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3

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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 London Borough of Lewisham consistently delivers services above minimum standards to children and young people. There is robust senior management across the authority's children's services supported by a clear strategic vision, high ambition, a cogent Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and strong partnerships with schools, health and community sectors. Good progress has been made in the majority of areas for improvement in last year's performance assessment and clear strategies are in place to address remaining challenges. Outcomes are improving for children and young people and capacity for further improvement is excellent.

Being healthy

The authority makes a good contribution to improving the health of children and young people in the area. A detailed and thorough analysis of need has allowed clear prioritisation of health targets. A number of key outcomes are improving, including ante-natal attendance rates, smoking in pregnancy, breastfeeding and immunisation rates. There are good examples of effective interagency collaboration to improve health outcomes within Sure Start programmes and Children's Centres and appropriate targeting of vulnerable families. Teenage pregnancy rates have continued to reduce although levels remain high and the incidence of sexually transmitted infections is becoming an increasing concern.

There is a strong focus on promoting health in the authority's schools. The majority are working towards the Healthy Schools standard. Investment in school meals has increased and take up has risen. Physical education provision has increased. There is good provision of substance misuse education in schools. Nearly all schools inspected last year were rated good at promoting healthy lifestyles.

Agencies are working well to promote mental health and reduce substance misuse. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are well resourced and comprehensive. There is effective collaboration with schools, social care services and the youth offending team (YOT) and good access to specialist assessment and intervention for vulnerable young people. The authority has a strategy in place to provide early support to young people with emotional difficulties via training of non specialist staff. Effective links between substance misuse services and the YOT allow timely specialist assessment and treatment of young offenders with problematic substance misuse. Most young people accessing treatment receive specialist child focused services.

There is an appropriate focus on improving health outcomes for looked after children. Dedicated staff and services are in place. Training and support are provided to carers. Levels of health and dental assessments are good, although attention is needed to increase immunisation rates for looked after children. The authority is mindful of the need to improve access to health services for looked after children placed outside Lewisham.

Specialist health services are in place for children with disabilities including those with the most complex needs. Good progress has been made in the integration of health, education and social care planning for these children.

Staying safe

Outcomes overall in this area are improving and the authority is making a good contribution to safeguarding children. All children on the Child Protection Register have allocated social workers and nearly all reviews of these children are held within timescales set. Attention has been given to the length of time children remain on the register and, additionally, to the levels of re-registration. Performance in these areas is good. Significant progress has been made in compliance with timescales for the completion of core assessments although levels of initial assessments completed within timescales remain low. The authority has appropriately examined causes of a significant increase in repeat referrals this year and has put in place suitable management case review mechanisms.

The authority has established its Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) with appropriate multi-agency representation and robust terms of reference. Good attention has been given to clarifying responsibilities of the LSCB members and partner agencies. Effective work across agencies is being undertaken to improve understanding of risks to children and thresholds for intervention. Written procedural guidance for staff in the field has been produced. The percentage of schools where pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are judged as good is high. All schools have anti bullying policies monitored systematically by the authority.

Fewer looked after children have multiple changes of placement and good progress has been made in achieving long-term stability of placements, now at acceptable levels but with room for further improvement. More looked after children are placed with foster carers and increasing numbers are fostered by family or friends. The authority has a clear strategy in place to further increase the proportion of looked after children in fostering placements. Levels of adoption have increased significantly although fewer looked after children were placed for adoption in a timely manner this year. The authority needs to ensure that all looked after children reviews are completed within the required timescales and have allocated social workers.

Children with disabilities who need safeguarding, or who are looked after, have specialist social workers. The authority is committed to improving the participation of young people in reviews of their statements of special educational need and an advocacy service has been commissioned to support this aim. There has been an improvement in the number of transitions plans completed this year and there is a clear management focus on securing further improvements.

The numbers of looked after children have reduced significantly this year, although the rate of registration on the Child Protection Register remains high. Good progress has been made in implementing information sharing and the common assessment framework in the authority with clear implementation plans, dedicated coordination posts and pilots in place. These initiatives, and increased investment in family support services this year, demonstrate the authority's commitment to the further development of preventive and early intervention services.

Enjoying and achieving

The authority makes a good contribution to improving outcomes in this area. There has been a significant increase in the number of childcare providers and places. The number of providers issued with actions following registration has reduced through improved support provided for applicants. The quality of childcare and nursery provision was judged as satisfactory or good in most inspections although a small proportion was considered inadequate. Swift action is taken where providers are unsatisfactory. There is a well developed integrated strategy for under-fives and a review of the structure of services is currently underway to enable better commissioning. Good support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in early years settings has resulted in a reduction in the number of under-fives referred for assessment.

Achievement in the Foundation Stage is below age expected standards, particularly in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Attainment in Key Stage 1 remains well below the national average and the number of boys at the lower levels is increasing. At Key Stage 2 standards continue to improve and are in line with the national average in English but below in mathematics and science. Standards have improved at Key Stage 3 and are in line with the national average in English but remain well below in mathematics and science. The attainment of boys is relatively low in all subjects. Value added indicators have improved from Key Stage 1 and are in the top quartile nationally with the exception of Key Stage 2 to 3. The percentage of students achieving one GCSE or more is above that of statistical neighbours.

A well aligned strategic approach to the primary and secondary strategies has had a positive impact on standards and data is used well to track achievement from the end of Key Stage 1. The authority has recognised the need to strengthen the rigour of assessment and the use of data to track progress more robustly in the early years and Foundation Stage. Focused work with parents of Black Caribbean boys has contributed to the rise in achievement of this group. Well targeted support has reduced the number of schools achieving results below floor targets and the number of schools requiring special measures. However, one school was judged to require special measures within the past 12 months. There is a good network of schools working together through collaboratives, federations and academies.

Attendance in primary and secondary schools is in line with the national average. It has improved in primary schools and remained at similar levels to last year in secondary schools. Although unauthorised absence remains high, the authority is working well with its schools to address this. Exclusions have reduced significantly over the past few years but permanent exclusions remain above the national average as do fixed-term exclusions in primary schools. There was a rise in exclusions in 2004/05 and Black Caribbean boys are over represented.

The provision for excluded pupils has improved and all are receiving at least 20 hours a week alternative tuition. There is a good range of provision for pupils with English as an additional language in Years 10 and 11. There are clear protocols in place for casual

admissions. Reintegration rates at Key Stage 3 remain a priority for the authority and a Key Stage 3 reintegration panel has been established to address this.

Fewer looked after children left care with GCSE or equivalent qualifications and fewer sat GCSE examinations in Year 11 than in the previous year. However levels of personal education plans are good. Monitoring of attendance has improved, although absence rates remain high. Attainment levels remain low, particularly at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4, despite slight improvement in Key Stage 3 and Year 11. Looked after children are provided with free access to the authority's leisure facilities. Improving educational outcomes for looked after children is a key priority within the CYPP and the authority is using its Local Public Service Agreement to strengthen its focus on this performance area.

Fewer statements are issued for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and there is a specific strategy in place to educate more pupils with statements of special educational need in mainstream schools. Funding is being delegated to schools to commission services. Achievement levels of pupils with statements are improving. Three special schools inspected by Ofsted this year were graded as good or better. The authority has identified the later transfer of pupils from mainstream settings to special schools as an issue to address.

Making a positive contribution

The authority is making a good contribution to outcomes in this area. The authority's commitment to young people's participation and its innovation in this area have been recognised by the award of Beacon Authority status. A young mayor has been elected and budget allocated. A young citizens' panel is in place and young people are surveyed as part of the annual residents' survey. There are clear routes in place for young people's views to be represented within strategic planning processes. Schools inspected have been rated good or better at supporting children's personal development and well-being and their contribution to the community. An appropriate focus is placed on the participation of vulnerable young people including looked after children, care leavers and children with disabilities. In addition to specific consultation exercises with looked after children, a standing care leavers' group is in place with views feeding into the authority's corporate parenting strategy. However, fewer looked after children participated in their statutory reviews this year. The authority needs to explore further ways to support young people in these processes.

Although offending rates and recidivism are increasing, there is evidence of reduction in re-offending by young people following community sentences. The performance of the YOT is improving. Effective links are in place with CAMHS and substance misuse services and steps have been taken to strengthen management of high risk offenders. The authority's crime prevention strategy has been supported by the establishment of Youth Inclusion Support Panels and there is a good focus on work with parents of young offenders. A clear strategy is in place to impact on the rates of offending by young people of Black and minority ethnic backgrounds with a number of targeted initiatives in place. Offending by looked after children has reduced slightly.

There are improving transition arrangements in place to support pupils through key educational transitions.

Achieving economic well-being

The authority makes an excellent contribution to improving outcomes in this area. The quality of education provided 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. Lewisham College has Beacon status and is a Centre for Vocational Excellence. Success rates at the college are above the national average for Level 1 and 2 courses. Effective links with the local Learning and Skills Council have resulted in additional funding for entry level places at the college, although more places are needed. In the authority as a whole, although results have generally improved faster than nationally for 16 and 19 year olds, the average point score for students taking GCE A level fell to well below the national average. The authority has worked in partnership with the range of post-16 providers to establish a protocol to coordinate, and share best practice and rationalise provision to address this.

The local 14-19 strategy is innovative and effective and the authority has lead Pathfinder status. Two independent schools have recently joined the Pathfinder. The Education Business Partnership has received a national award for its improvement of the quality of work experience in the authority. A high percentage of pupils in Years 10 and 11 take part in well structured work experience placements and all schools are delivering the statutory requirements for work-related learning at Key Stage 4. Good interagency collaboration provides tailored short courses and increased places for young people not in education, employment or training.

The proportion of those not in employment, education or training has reduced and there has been an increase in the number of young mothers taking up the Care to Learn grant. Priority childcare places are given to those in receipt of a job seeker's allowance, while Sure Start programmes have targeted support for lone parents and provide skills training for parents. Financial assistance for home to school travel is targeted appropriately.

Outcomes for care leavers are improving. All have personal advisors and pathway plans in place. More care leavers are living in suitable accommodation and are engaged in education, training and employment at age 19. Clear operational protocols are in place with the housing department and Connexions service and collaboration between agencies is good.

Levels of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in education, training and employment have increased. A dedicated personal advisor works with this group and links with Connexions are good. Transition planning for those young people with continuing care needs is improving and is a priority within the CYPP.

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

The authority has made good progress in integrating children's services. The Children and Young People Directorate is now well established and the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership is firmly embedded within the overall partnership framework and community strategy. The authority's self-assessment demonstrates a clear understanding of strengths and areas for improvement within children's services. A detailed and outcome focused CYPP has been produced based on a thorough analysis of need and good consultation with young people and their carers. There is strong engagement of NHS, community and schools sectors at strategic and operational levels and increasing joint commissioning and collaboration between agencies.

There is strong leadership and ambition within senior management and a positive trajectory in improvement of outcomes has been maintained. Operational plans accurately identify key priority areas and spending is clearly linked to corporate strategy and priorities. Resources are targeted appropriately and value for money considerations are increasingly addressed within commissioning activity.

The authority has a strong focus on early intervention, preventive services, and family support. Good progress has been made with the implementation of information sharing and the common assessment framework. There is increasing integration in assessment and planning for children with more complex needs. The children's centres programme is now progressing as planned and an ambitious parenting strategy is being developed.

There is an appropriate focus on improving performance management and quality assurance within social care services. More robust systems and processes are being established. Managers are implementing strategies to improve the efficiency of fostering services and address rising unit costs of looked after children services. Higher numbers of social workers have been recruited to key fieldwork teams this year and levels of sickness have reduced. However, vacancies in social care posts remain a challenge.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong partnerships at strategic and operational levels • improving health outcomes for young children • access to CAMHS and substance misuse services • strong focus on health promotion in schools. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further reduction in teenage pregnancy and improvement in young people's sexual health • immunisation rates for looked after children and access to health services for looked after children placed outside Lewisham.

<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all children on the CPR have allocated social workers • good improvement in the timescales for completion of core assessments • progress with stability of placements for looked after children. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the levels of initial assessments completed within set timescales • the ongoing management review of repeat referrals • the completion of looked after children reviews within timescales • the allocation of social workers for all looked after children.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase in the number of childcare places and provision with good levels of SEN support for early years settings • improved value added at Key Stages 1 to 4 • good use of data to target support • provision for excluded pupils. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standards and achievement at Key Stage 1 and 3, especially for boys • attendance and achievement of looked after children • exclusion levels of Black Caribbean boys.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overall participation of young people in strategic planning • focus on work with parents of young offenders • improvement in transitions planning. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • looked after children participation in statutory reviews • further attention to offending rates and recidivism within the overall YOT improvement strategy.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • levels of participation in employment, education and training • care leavers' participation in employment, education and training • and levels in suitable accommodation • collaboration with Education Business Partnership, Connexions and the Learning and Skills Council • effective 14-19 strategy. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • none.

<p><i>Management of children's services</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well established integrated Children and Young People Directorate with strong leadership • strong self-assessment and culture of self challenge • effective strategic relationships with NHS, community sector and schools • strong focus on early intervention/preventive and family support services. 	<p><i>Management of children's services;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of performance information systems and data by frontline managers and staff in social care services • implementation of strategy to improve efficiency of fostering services • further improvement in recruitment and retention of social care staff.
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Aspects for focus in a future joint area review or the next APA

- The impact of the authority's strategies to raise standards of educational attainment by children and young people.
- The progress with information sharing, implementation of the common assessment framework and joint approaches to assessment of children.
- The impact of strategies to improve use of performance information systems and data by frontline staff and managers in social care services.

Yours sincerely



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