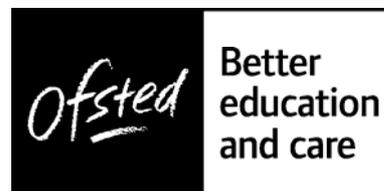


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Making Social Care
Better for People



Ms Frankie Sulke
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1 December 2005

Dear Ms Sulke

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF LONDON BOROUGH OF LEWISHAM'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 27 June 2005 to assess the performance of the education and children's social care services within your 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.

Being healthy

Outcomes in this area are good, particularly in the way that healthy lifestyles are promoted through partnership between key services. In schools there is good participation in sport. Over a third of schools are working at recognised 'Healthy School' status and the borough anticipates that it is likely to achieve its target of 50% by December 2006. A healthy eating initiative has been well received by schools. Children and young people have good oral health. The health needs of looked after children are met very effectively and indicators exceed national averages.

The number of social workers who work as part of the multidisciplinary Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) team is high in comparison with comparator groups. The council is supporting a range of innovative strategies in schools to promote emotional well-being and recognises the need to further improve access to preventative services. There is timely referral to CAMHS of young people known to the Youth Offending Team.

The incidence of teenage pregnancy is high; however, the 'Teenage Pregnancy Strategy' is seeking to reduce this high level. This strategy is targeting looked after children appropriately. There is a relatively high level of cannabis use in the borough, as identified by the council's own 'Communities that Care' survey. There is suitably

targeted work to address this issue. The use of class A drugs is declining. There is a relatively high hospital admission rate of children and young people with asthma, which the council is seeking to address through partnership working with health colleagues.

Staying safe

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory overall, and more secure than last year, but there are important aspects that require improvement. It is encouraging that the council recognises the challenges that need to be addressed.

A very critical Children's Services Inspection in 2004 led to significant management changes and a recognition by elected members that issues of child protection, placement stability and permanence planning needed to be addressed with some urgency.

The inspection resulted in a detailed local improvement agenda. New appointments at senior levels have, with elected member support, embarked on major realignment of structures, posts and functions.

During this turbulent period it is encouraging to note that, in general, a number of performance indicators have shown some improvements. In particular, child protection cases are more securely monitored, as shown in part by higher levels of case conferences, and a number of indicators suggest that the register overall is managed more actively. All child protection cases are now reviewed as required (there was one case not reviewed within the timescale, but the explanation for this was acceptable).

The council must over the forthcoming year improve its level of assessments on children referred within 7 days from 55% and of core assessments within 35 days, also from 55% and ensure that the quality of assessments and reviews is included within a more active quality assurance framework. There has been a sharp increase in the proportion of minority ethnic children in need, but this appears to match the profile of the population with greater numbers of younger people within the borough from BME communities. Work on assessing the impact of policies on promoting race equality is in progress and will need to be reported on more fully to CSCI over the coming year.

Other relevant matters to address are: to ensure that those who refer to children's social care services get good and timely feedback about the outcomes of the referral; to enable more parents to attend child protection conferences; and, to achieve a better understanding across all agencies of child protection thresholds. The strength of the developing interagency work to support the protection of vulnerable children, especially between schools and social care, is noted and welcomed.

There are also some very recent signs that the high numbers of children looked after is reducing, but this will require ongoing attention this year. Lewisham faces a particular

challenge in addressing the large number of adolescents in residential care, a consequence of a previously less well managed service. Several children looked after were not allocated to a named social worker, and the council will address this matter accepting that some work may be carried out by assistants, subject to the risks of the case and with appropriate supervision.

Progress is being made with the placement of children looked after aged under 10 in foster care, but there remains a significant challenge for the council to address the overall issue of children's placements, to improve permanence planning and adoptions, to reduce the use of residential care and to increase local fostering opportunities. In particular, attention needs to be focussed on ensuring that those children looked after long-term have stable placements. This is suggested by the performance figures for children looked after for more than four years who were in the same foster placement for more than two years. Furthermore, a recent inspection into the council's fostering service highlighted a number of standards that must be addressed.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are very good. The overall quality of early years provision is generally good or very good and supports children well in enabling them to meet the early learning goals. There has been a large expansion in the number of childminders and in out-of-school childcare. When inspected, a minority of full-time day settings were judged to be unsatisfactory; new childminders, full day care and out-of-school facilities all received a significantly higher number of actions prior to registration. The authority needs to ensure that day care provision applicants and prospective childminders have enough training, advice and support to ensure that they are well prepared for registration. The authority is taking effective action to address this issue.

Standards in Lewisham schools have improved significantly over the last five years and performance has been maintained or improved at each key stage. At Key Stage 4 in 2004, Lewisham was the second most improved authority nationally. Results at the end of Key Stage 1 remain in the lower quartile nationally but are in line with statistical neighbours although reading results were better. Standards in key stages 2 and 3 are in line with statistical neighbours. The GCSE A*-G results 2004 represented a rise on the previous year and were better than statistical neighbours. The GCSE A*-C results also improved in line with statistical neighbours. The education service recognises the action needed to raise the attainment of particular groups of pupils and is taking steps to address this. At Key Stage 4, the gender gap reduced as boys' performance improved. At Key Stage 3 the performance of Black Caribbean pupils in mathematics and English improved at a faster rate than the Lewisham average.

The proportion of looked after children gaining one or more GCSE has improved and is in line with the national average and with similar authorities.

The level of authorised absence from school is low but the level of unauthorised absence is high. This is due, in part, to the rigour demanded of schools in recording absence data accurately so that, for instance, holiday absence is always recorded as unauthorised. Strategies to improve attendance in targeted schools have been effective. However, the absence rates of looked after children are relatively high. The rate of exclusions is falling; relatively high exclusion figures in primary schools have been reduced significantly and secondary exclusions are in line with statistical neighbours. The reintegration of pupils at Key Stage 2 is good. At Key Stage 3 there are too many pupils out of mainstream school for longer than a year. Although the numbers of pupils receiving alternative provision is high, there are good opportunities at Key Stage 4 for pupils to access appropriate vocational education. There is a policy of zero-tolerance of the exclusion from school of looked after children, children on the child protection register and of pupils with statements of special educational need; this is commendable.

Support for schools causing concern is good and the number of schools in a category of concern has reduced; the authority has established robust systems of monitoring and is developing a system of school federations in order to share good practice in school improvement. The authority's improved proactive approach to intervention has resulted in fewer schools being identified as causing concern.

The authority maintains a relatively high proportion of statements but is gradually starting to reduce this level through ceasing to maintain a small number and reducing the number of new statements issued.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are generally good. The council prides itself on the efforts taken to consult with young people and seek their views. The council has an elected Young Mayor. In particular, the development of the first citizenship specialist school in the country and having a school council in each school reflect the intent to help all children make their contribution.

Levels of reoffending are lower than the national average, but first time offenders coming into the criminal justice system have shown a recent rise, against a background of significant reductions of young people warned or convicted between 2000 and 2004. This rise is being addressed with the local police, within existing co-operative working relationships and the significant priority the council places on addressing offending by young people. In addition, the council has identified concerns about young offenders from black and minority ethnic communities, and it is to be hoped that early intervention using the principles of restorative justice will impact both on this group and others on the edge of the more formal criminal justice system. However, the proportion of children looked after either warned or convicted has shown a necessary decrease.

92 per cent of schools were free from bullying, racism or other forms of harassment. In one school where this had been a difficulty remedial action has been taken.

A high number of vulnerable young people contribute to their social care reviews, and this is good. However, more attention needs to be paid to the impact of their contribution, and their levels of satisfaction.

The importance of robust transition arrangements are recognised locally, and well evidenced in a number of cases. In particular, additional resources were made available for 91 children to support their transition to reception classes, and a secondary transfer programme ensured that 346 vulnerable children contributed to their own induction programmes. The support for children with special educational needs is good.

Challenges that remain, and recognised by the authority, include: improved transition arrangements for children looked after out of borough; more rigorous attention to the transition planning and arrangements for children with disabilities; and, further work on helping those with ongoing mental health needs as they become adults.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are very good. Lewisham has an innovative 14-19 strategy and lead Pathfinder status in London. Overall, 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 national averages. The authority has responded positively to the need to address concerns about strategic planning for post-16 provision. There is good collaboration in the planning and delivery of post-16 education and training and the authority works effectively with local colleges, particularly in developing a wider range of vocational options. Specific measures to tackle the issue of young people not in education, employment or further training have been successful, including marked success in engaging Black Caribbean young men, and numbers have fallen as a result; performance is better than statistical neighbours. Initiatives have been successful in encouraging low attaining students to remain in education post-16. However, there are some weaknesses in the quality of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities in post-16 mainstream settings. Through a targeted 'Leaving Care Service', support given to care leavers is good.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the promotion of healthy lifestyles for children and young people. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reducing teenage pregnancy rates.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> detailed action plan in response to the Children’s Inspection more CP conferences more effectively managed CP register CP cases reviewed some recent signs of better control of looked after population. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> speed and quality of assessments and reviews ensure good and timely feedback to referrers parental attendance at CP conferences clarity concerning CP thresholds across organisations placements of looked after children – less residential and more local fostering.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the quality of early years provision support for schools in Ofsted categories of concern attainment has improved significantly over the last five years. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> further reduce differences in performance related to gender and ethnicity reducing the proportion of looked after children absent from school reducing the number of pupils in alternative provision at Key Stage 3 for longer than one year.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consultation with young people, and election of young mayor low levels of reoffending and reduction in young people convicted or warned fewer children looked after warned or convicted schools generally free from bullying, racism or harassment high number of young people contribute to reviews some transition arrangements within schools support for children with SEN. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> young offenders from BME communities transition arrangements for children with disabilities and those with ongoing mental health needs transition arrangements for children looked after living out of the borough.

<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good collaboration with colleges in delivering post-16 education and training • the proportion of young people progressing to higher education or training is above national averages • good support for care leavers. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quality of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities in post-16 mainstream settings.
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Service management

The self assessment demonstrates good levels of partnership working, sound awareness of matters that need to be addressed, improvement plans founded on performance information that is good for education and getting better for social care and increasingly sophisticated approaches to assessing needs in the context of developing consultative processes.

Good progress is being made in moving to the integrated children’s services as required. The recent appointment of the Executive Director of Children’s Services (the Director of Education) marks a significant step forward in the process, not least as she brings existing skills and determination to implement an improvement agenda to the work of social care for children. There is strong corporate support for children’s services and the authority is well focused on outcome measures.

Recruitment and retention remain challenges for social care, as does the more consistent use of performance information to drive forward improvements. Within education services these difficulties have been overcome; the use of data to inform service design and delivery is very good. Whilst capacity to improve within education services is excellent, demonstrated by improved outcomes, capacity to improve within social care is less secure, although it will be enhanced by the support offered through collaborative work with the DfES, as initiated by CSCI. In the context of the forward looking decisions made by the council to support social care improvements with additional funding; by requiring regular feedback from officers through scrutiny; and, with the appointment of strong leadership to social care, the council is assessed to have excellent capacity to improve overall, recognising that the challenge for senior managers will be to translate the improvement agenda throughout children’s social care services in a demonstrable manner.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

Healthy life-styles are promoted for children and young people:

Looked after children's health needs are addressed:

- effectiveness of the teenage pregnancy strategy especially in respect of looked-after children.

Staying safe

The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:

Agencies collaborate to safeguard children according to the requirements of current government guidance:

- reduced residential care for children looked after coupled with more local fostering opportunities
- better understanding of CP thresholds across other organisations
- speed and quality assurance of children and families assessments.

Enjoying and achieving

Action is taken to ensure that educational provision 5-16 is of good quality:

- achievement of pupils particularly where there is an issue of gender or ethnicity.

Educational provision is made for children who do not attend school:

- prompt reintegration into school of children and young people, particularly at Key Stage 3.

Children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy and achieve:

- attendance of looked-after children and young people.

Making a positive contribution

Children and young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups, are supported in managing changes and responding to challenges in their lives:

- transition arrangements for vulnerable children and young people.

Achieving economic well-being

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to achieve economic well-being:

- quality of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities in post-16 mainstream settings.

Final judgements

Please see your final annual performance assessment judgements attached at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS

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

APA final judgements 2005: London Borough of Lewisham

Areas for judgement	Final judgements ¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	2
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	4
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 capacity to improve its services for children and young people	4

1

Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Very good
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good/promising
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate