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17 December 2008

Mr Gareth Williams  
Director of Children and Young People's Services  
Leicestershire County Council  
Children and Young People's Service  
Room 115  
County Hall  
Glenfield  
Leicestershire  
LE3 8RF

Dear Mr Williams

## **Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Leicestershire County Council 2008**

This letter summarises the findings of the 2008 annual performance assessment (APA) for your council. The evaluations and judgements in the letter draw on a range of data and information which covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. As you know, the APA is not based on an inspection of your services and, therefore, can only provide a snapshot based on the evidence considered. As such, I am grateful to you for assuring the quality of the data provided.

Performance is judged on a four point scale as detailed in the handbook. I should emphasise that the grades awarded are based on an overall 'best fit' model. For instance, an outstanding judgement of Grade 4 reflects that overall most aspects, but not necessarily all, of the services in the area are working very well. We know that one of the features of outstanding provision is the drive for greater improvement and no council would suggest, and nor would Ofsted, that a judgement of outstanding indicates that everything is perfect. Similarly within a judgement of inadequate overall, Grade 1, there could be some aspects of the overall service that are adequate or even good. Judgements are made in a rounded way, balancing all of the evidence and giving due consideration to outcomes, local and national contexts, priorities and decision-making.



The following table sets out the grades awarded for performance in 2008.

<b>Assessment judgement area</b>	<b>APA grade</b>
Overall effectiveness of children's services	3
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	3
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	4
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	4

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale  
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate*

## Overall effectiveness of children’s services

Grade 3

Leicestershire County Council delivers services for children and young people that are consistently above the minimum requirements. The council’s capacity to improve its services for young people and its management of these services are outstanding. The council has responded well to the issues raised in the JAR and the APA of 2007 with improvements evident in most areas. The contribution to children and young people being healthy and staying safe is good. The work of the local safeguarding board operates on a firm foundation of joint working. Effective multi-agency partnership working ensures that most children and young people feel safe. Services for looked after children are good where strong preventative work keeps the number of looked after children low. The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The council has ensured that children and young people have very good access to decision making so that they make an outstanding contribution to the services that affect their lives. They are actively consulted and become involved in planning services at both a strategic and operational levels. Action to ensure economic well-being is good, as demonstrated by the attainment of 16- to 19-year-olds. Participation in education, employment and training by young people is improving and is well above that found in similar councils and nationally. Educational achievement is good overall. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 have been outstanding and the progress young people make from their starting points is good. However, progress by the end of Year 11 in GCSE examinations is slower and is not matched to that made at the end of Year 9. Overall, the very strong leadership and effective multi-agency partnership working arrangements deliver an ambitious programme based on a clear analysis of need. All partners have a very good and clear understanding of strengths and areas for development, which is evident in the CYPP. The council’s services perform well against the majority of performance indicators, reflecting robust management.

## Being healthy

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council’s analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

Major strengths
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There are effective partnerships that demonstrate a real commitment to the role each agency plays in improving healthy outcomes for children and young people. Teenage pregnancy rates are reducing and are significantly lower than those found nationally.</li> <li>▪ There are a significant number of health care initiatives in place which ensure that the health and well-being of children and young people are good. The overall infant mortality rates are lower than the national average. The percentage of schools participating in the Healthy Schools Programme is above</li> </ul>

<p>the national average.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Access to child and adolescent mental health services for most groups, including looked after children, is good. There has been good improvement since the JAR.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Performance on completing annual dental and health assessments for looked after children has decreased and is below that of similar councils and the national average.</li> </ul>

## Staying safe

**Grade 3**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p><b>Major strengths</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Local Safeguarding Children Board operates on a firm foundation of joint working to protect children and young people from the risk of significant harm.</li> <li>▪ Effective preventative actions have resulted in low numbers of children being looked after. The numbers are lower than similar councils and are fifth lowest nationally.</li> <li>▪ The timeliness of reviews for looked after children has improved and is now above that found in similar councils and nationally. As a result children are effectively safeguarded and their care and welfare are reviewed suitably.</li> <li>▪ The timeliness of initial and core assessments are significantly better than that of similar councils and the national average.</li> <li>▪ Adoptions of looked after children has continued to improve and remains above those in similar councils and nationally. There are effective permanency planning arrangements in place to secure positive outcomes for children.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Important weaknesses and areas for development</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The long term stability of placements of looked after children and young people are lower than that found in similar councils and nationally.</li> </ul>

## Enjoying and achieving

**Grade 3**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area overvalue the progress that has been made in the improvement in standards at the end of Key Stage 4.

### Major strengths

- Children in early years settings achieve higher than the national average in personal, social and emotional, and communication, language and literacy assessments.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are good overall, being above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are above the national and similar councils in English and mathematics. The trend of improvement is greater than that seen in similar councils and nationally. Standards in science are above the national average and in line with similar councils.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are outstanding. They are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science and above those attained in similar councils. Learners make good progress in all three subjects.
- Outcomes for five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, are two percentage points above the national average.
- The percentage of looked after children achieving at least one GCSE is improving and is higher than the national average and similar councils.
- The council takes prompt and effective action to improve schools so that fewer are placed in an Ofsted category of concern compared to similar councils and nationally. Currently, there is only one primary school in a category of concern that has a notice to improve.
- Fixed term exclusions from primary and secondary schools are lower than those in similar councils and nationally. Permanent exclusions are falling in secondary schools.

### Important weaknesses and areas for development

- Too many secondary schools are in the lowest quartile nationally because children and young people make less progress at Key Stage 4 than they do at Key Stage 3.
- The percentage of looked after children who missed a total of at least 25 days of schooling is increasing and is above that found in similar councils and nationally.
- Fixed term exclusions for pupils with statements of special educational needs in secondary schools are rising at a greater rate than the national trend and where the trend in similar councils is falling.

## Making a positive contribution

**Grade 4**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is outstanding. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

### Major strengths

- The council promotes the involvement of children and young people in consultation and decision making very successfully. Children and young people take part in local youth forums, including in the county youth council for Leicestershire. These help to shape the services because children and young people's views are taken seriously.
- The range and quality of the services provided by the youth service is outstanding. The percentage of young people aged 13 to 19 reached by publicly funded youth services is higher than national and similar council comparators.
- Well targeted action by the council and its partners, including the youth offending team, has reduced the numbers of young people coming into the youth justice system, as well as those who re-offend. These rates are significantly below those in similar councils and nationally.
- Looked after children have opportunities to attend their statutory reviews and their participation is very good.
- Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very effectively involved in their annual reviews and transition planning to support their move from children's to adult services.

### Important weaknesses and areas for development

## Achieving economic well-being

**Grade 3**

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

### Major strengths

- Attainment of 16- to 19-year-olds is good. Improving percentage of young people achieving Level 2 by the age of 19 so that it is above the national average. Effective partnership working has enabled the development of a broad and flexible 14 to 19 curriculum, with increasing opportunities for vocational courses and new Diploma courses.
- Participation in education, employment or training by young people is improving and is well above that found in similar councils and nationally. The proportion of young people aged 16 to 19 who are not in employment, education or training has fallen over the last three years and is lower than that in similar councils and nationally.
- Children and young people receive good help in preparing for their working lives. The number of young people completing an apprenticeship has increased significantly and the year-on-year change is above national and similar comparators.

- The proportion of children looked after aged 16 and who were then in education, employment or training when aged 19 is high.
- The proportion of young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are not in employment, education or training is lower than that found in similar councils and nationally.

**Important weaknesses and areas for development**

- The proportion of 16- to 19-year-old mothers who are in education, employment or training is reducing and is below the national average and the average for similar councils.

**Capacity to improve, including the management of children’s services**

**Grade 4**

The council’s capacity to improve its services for children and young people is outstanding and its management of these services is also outstanding.

There is a very strong and sustainable track record of improvement in key service areas. The CYPP for 2008-2011 sets out the council’s clear intention for the next three years and is based on rigorous self-evaluation. Financial management is a strength. Progress on joint commissioning is good and optimum use is made of partnership working to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of local services. Children and young people are actively consulted and are given good opportunities to become involved in planning services at a strategic and operational level. They are able to make a positive contribution to the services that affect their lives. This is achieved through the ‘Pyramid of Participation’ which includes parish youth forums, school councils and voluntary groups. The council has a robust system of performance management. For example, a review of residential children services is underway to assess how effective these services are in meeting the needs of looked after children. There is a clear workforce planning and development strategy. There are well-embedded professional development review processes for staff within the council and personal targets are linked effectively to service targets and corporate aims. Leadership by the Director of Children’s Services, lead members and senior officers is robust and passionate which leads to improving outcomes for children and young people.

**Major strengths**

- Leadership of the council is very strong and has effective working relationships with partners. It champions the needs of children and young people, underpinned by a clear vision and a strategic framework.
- The prioritisation of objectives is very good. The priorities are informed by an accurate analysis of needs and are based on widespread consultation. Subsequent action taken demonstrates proven capacity to improve. For example, the council reports that the 2008 unvalidated GCSE results show that

the trend of improvement is being maintained.

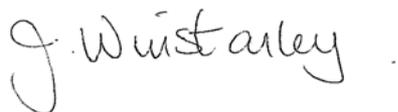
- The council and its partners have a robust system of performance management. Systematic and thorough review of services ensures continual improvement.

**Important weaknesses and areas for development**

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.

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.

Yours sincerely



Juliet Winstanley  
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