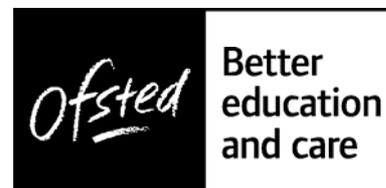


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Making Social Care
Better for People



Mr Gareth Williams
Director Children's Services
(Designate)
Leicestershire County Council
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1 December 2005

Dear Mr Williams

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on Friday 15 July 2005 to assess the performance of the education and social care services within your authority. We are grateful for the information that 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 very good and result from the strong contributions made by both social care and education services. The effective way in which services are co-ordinated ensures that they focus clearly on specific local priorities.

Participation in sports is good and there has been a particular increase in the numbers studying GCSE and A-level physical education and dance programmes. The authority is well on track to reach its healthy schools standards and targets. Health checks for looked after children have improved from band 3 to 5 over the last year. The use of BAAF health forms across the service has resulted in more detailed assessments of need being made and acted upon. The youth service provides access to a wide range of information to promote healthy lifestyles amongst the young people with whom it works.

The reduction in teenage pregnancies is above the national average and double the council area's own targets. Sex and relationship education is sound but there is further work to be done to improve provision, particularly in relation to education for boys and support for teenage fathers.

Access to services for children and young people with mental health needs is good with satisfactory systems in place for referrals for acute services. The council has been

successful in obtaining funding for a Black and Minority Ethnic (Mental Health) post within the Children & Adolescent Mental Health Service that will focus particularly on the needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people in the Charnwood area. Early intervention services are available through the Family Steps programme and access to drugs and substance misuse programmes has been made possible through the Drug and Alcohol Action Team Young People's Partnership Grant. There is effective partnership working in relation to meeting the health and care needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Staying safe

Outcomes in relation to staying safe are very positive. Children and young people living in Leicestershire are provided with the safe environment to which they are entitled. The authority's policies recognise what constitutes a safe environment and their implementation is monitored consistently and rigorously. There are very good arrangements in place between the authority and partner agencies to ensure that all issues relating to child protection are fully shared and acted upon.

The authority has clear referral systems in place; families and children at risk are identified and the quality of preventative support is good. Timescales for initial assessments have shown improvement but are still taking longer than those in similar councils. The percentage of core assessments completed within 35 working days is very good and the council's performance is much better than that of its comparator councils. All assessments are checked against service plans and monitored during the supervision process.

All child protection reviews have been carried out within the required timescales and conducted by an independent chair. All children and young people who are on the child protection register and looked after children are allocated to a qualified social worker.

All key performance indicators relating to looked after children are very good particularly in relation to stability of placement within foster care and placement for adoption within twelve months of the child's best interest decision having been made.

The Ofsted inspection of the LEA in 2003 commented that the health and safety, welfare and child protection was highly satisfactory. Ofsted inspections of Leicestershire schools inspected during 2004 and 2005 found that arrangements to meet pupils' care, welfare, health and safety were consistently good or very good.

Together with partner agencies the authority has piloted BRIDGES, an information-sharing database that aims for early identification of children in need. With neighbouring authorities, Leicestershire has signed up to a regional Special Educational Needs Protocol aimed at ensuring children and young people do not become 'lost' to agencies when moving into and out of the area so that their needs can continue to be tracked and maintained.

Children who are looked after have access to a Children's Rights Service. This service is available to those living in foster care and in residential care. An independent chairperson conducts reviews of looked after children and for children who are subject to Court proceedings there is an independent Guardian appointed by the Court to ensure that the welfare of looked after children are met and that the council provides a safe environment to live in.

With partner agencies and Barnados the council has set up a Safe-4-You project that provides accommodation in a place of safety for young runaways. The aim of the project is to ensure the child or young person is safe whilst an assessment of his or her needs is undertaken, usually within 24 hours.

At the instigation of the Chief Executive, he and senior managers from both social care and education continue to meet with other Chief executives and senior managers from partner agencies covering Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. These meetings demonstrate a strategic commitment to keeping children safe and are strongly supported by the Police, the NHS and the Area Child Protection Committees. One outcome from such a meeting is that an information sharing policy has been agreed across all partner agencies.

There is a low incidence of permanent exclusion overall and a very low incidence of permanent exclusion amongst looked after children (approximately 1%). Attendance is rigorously monitored to ensure children and young people are not at risk of participating in anti-social activities or placing themselves in risky situations due to their unauthorised absence from school.

Leicestershire schools and colleges have been collating annual data on the frequency and nature of racist incidents, from which support has been targeted to those schools and colleges that demonstrate the most reported incidents. Whilst the council has this reporting and monitoring system in place it has not as yet carried out any Equality Impact Assessments within education although two have been completed within social care.

In relation to Early Years advice, guidance and support, Ofsted inspections identified that childcare providers have a far higher percentage of actions required at initial registration than found to be the case nationally. This indicates that the service is not providing pre-registration information at a level that helps prospective providers understand what they need to do to become registered.

Recently the council has taken steps to change the way the Early Years Service responds in providing pre-registration information and guidance. It is too early to assess the impact of this change in practice.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are good.

The authority is satisfactorily promoting early years education to meet early learning goals and the quality of care provision is satisfactory.

Standards in the core subjects in Key Stage 1 are generally above the averages achieved nationally and those for statistical neighbours. In Key Stage 2 standards are in line with those averages, although performance in science is above the national average. Standards in Key Stage 3 are above the national average for mathematics and English and well above for science. In all three subjects, standards have been consistently above statistical neighbours' averages for the last five years. Despite this strong performance at Key Stage 3, standards at Key Stage 4 have been no more than average for the last five years. Although the value added from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 is above average, it is below average from Key Stage 2 to GCSE or its equivalent.

School inspection reports show generally good outcomes in terms of pupils' attitudes, the range of enrichment activities offered and the support for learning outside the school day. The quality of learning is satisfactory at primary level and good in secondary schools. There is strong support for literacy and numeracy, for gifted and talented pupils and for minority ethnic pupils, including Travellers. There is a wide range of arts and recreational activities available within the county. There are remission schemes to help support access to such activities for children and young people from low income homes. However, there is further work to be done to ensure that schools are being proactive in identifying those who might benefit from such arrangements.

Despite recent improvements, only 80% of permanently excluded pupils receive the 20 or more hours of tuition to which they are entitled.

In 2004, the percentage of primary schools causing concern was more than twice the average nationally and for statistical neighbours. Recent changes, particularly in the personnel advice given to schools, have resulted in a very rapid improvement in the situation. There are persistent difficulties in recruiting permanent head teachers to the county's schools.

Provision for children with Special Educational Needs has improved since the last Ofsted inspection of the LEA and is now satisfactory. However, the pupil referral unit has been identified by the council as still requiring improvement. The proportion of care leavers with a GCSE or equivalent qualification is low in comparison to that of similar councils.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are generally good. The council actively encourages children and young people to make a positive contribution and has good systems in place to enable participation via school councils, surveys and Youth Councils co-ordinated throughout the seven district and borough councils by the Youth Service and focus groups.

For children and young people who are looked after in public care there are very good additional arrangements for including their views through their individual care reviews, meetings with the Children's Rights Officer, Corpor8 group who meet with elected members, as well as having an allocated social worker or other professional workers who they can talk to.

Looked after children who participate in the T2C group meet every six months with the Corporate Parent Steering Group and senior managers from Children's Services where they can raise and discuss issues of concern. During 2004, the council employed a care leaver to work within the Social Services Department and with elected members to ensure the experiences of a care user could contribute to the work of Children's Services and help in service planning.

Appropriate services are provided for looked after children. The council has a Black Cases Panel that oversees the quality of care provided to children and young people from black minority communities. The Panel reports to the Children's Services Management Team and where a need is identified provide advice, support and access to specialist services.

Arrangements for the consultation and participation of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and those with disabilities are less well developed. The council needs to engage sufficiently with these groups and encourage greater participation, particularly in relation to forthcoming events such as in planning services to meet the Every Child Matters agenda.

A group of young people gained the first national Princess Diana Anti-Bullying award for their involvement in developing the Anti-Bullying Strategy and a national Wave Maker Award because of the positive impact their work had on the lives of other students.

Although levels of offending by children and young people living in Leicestershire have not reduced overall, final warnings, reprimands and convictions of looked after children have maintained acceptable performance levels.

In 2004 a joint inspectorate inspection of the Leicestershire Youth Offending Service judged the overall performance to be satisfactory with a good basis for development. It noted many positive features. The inspection did, however, identify that there was limited group work provision with no particular intervention for children and young

people from ethnic minority communities. The inspection also identified that the Youth Inclusion and Support Panels Scheme needed to identify more accurately the needs of ethnic minority groups. In response to the inspection findings, the council has finalised an action plan and is in the process of implementing it.

In relation to Early Years, at initial registration, Ofsted issued a higher than national average proportion of full day care and school day care providers with actions for equal opportunities. Full day care, sessional day and multiple day care providers received a higher proportion of actions relating to behaviour and in the case of partnership working a higher than national average proportion of actions were imposed on childminders, full day and school day care providers.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are variable but, in general, they are good. Inspection findings in 2004/05 showed that, with one exception, the relevant indicators for this outcome were all met or exceeded by the council. All looked after children have pathway plans and the leaving care team supports them until 21, or 24 if in full-time education. The proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training has been consistently very good for four years and the authority exceeds government targets in this area. The Learning and Skills Council Access Fund gives targeted help to post-16 students with disabilities and from low income families, to help them to continue in education, and the Breaking the Barriers project assists young people with learning difficulties to gain work. The council also manages a supported employment scheme for those with disabilities and provides them with further good support, for example through its mobility schemes for those young people who are unable to use public transport.

The average point scores of pupils entered for GCSE/VCE and A/AS examinations are in line with the national and statistical neighbours' averages and there is no school with an inadequate sixth form. In collaboration with stakeholders, the council has developed an effective Key Stage 4 strategy that focuses on promoting continuity and progression from Key Stage 3 through collaborative projects within zones. Support is appropriately targeted on specific subjects and groups, including looked after children and more able pupils. This has been successful in producing measurable improvements in participation rates post 16 and in raising examination results in specific subjects and within targeted localities.

Although the council has made clear progress in these areas, it has been slow to develop a wider 14 to 19 strategy. It has articulated a vision, with supporting principles, for 13 to 19 education, reflecting the Government's agenda for producing broad, inclusive, vocationally relevant and flexible 14 to 19 provision. This is being developed and implemented through area planning partnership groups. Some work has been started, for example on developing common induction protocols for post-16 options and analysing the sustainability of A level provision. However, these developments are at a very early stage and their impact is still to be felt.

School inspection reports show generally good outcomes in terms of pupils' attitudes, the range of enrichment activities offered and support for learning outside the school day. The quality of learning is satisfactory at primary level and good in secondary schools. There is strong support for literacy and numeracy, for gifted and talented pupils and for minority ethnic pupils, including Travellers. There is a wide range of arts and recreational activities available within the county. There are remission schemes to help support access to such activities for children and young people from low-income homes. However, there is further work to be done to ensure that schools are actively identifying those who might benefit from such arrangements.

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 • partnership working in relation to SEN and children with disabilities • reduction in teenage pregnancies above national average and twice that of council area's own target • provision and participation of sports in schools • good access to Children & Adolescent Mental Health Services 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sex and relationship education for teenage boys.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing children and young people with a safe environment • robust child protection procedures • support for children looked after • commitment at a strategic level to provide safe outcomes for children and young people living within Leicestershire. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to ensure that the Early Years Service provides pre-registration advice and guidance at a level that reduces the high percentage of pre-registration actions imposed by Ofsted • to improve timescales for initial assessments • to progress the completion and implementation of Equality Impact Assessments within children's services.

<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in line or above national average standards of early years education and Key Stages 1- 3 • support for minority ethnic groups including travellers • support for gifted and talented pupils. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to improve performance at Key Stage 4 • to continue to explore reasons for low 'Value Added' • To ensure schools are proactive in promoting remission schemes so that all pupils have access to enrichment opportunities • To ensure all permanently excluded pupils receive 20+ hours of tuition • To improve the Pupil Referral Units as identified by council.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high proportion of young people leaving care and young people with learning disabilities in education, employment or training • role of Black Cases Panel in ensuring the needs of children & young people from minority communities are met and that their views are heard • Princess Diana award to young people for their involvement in developing the Anti-Bullying strategy and a national Wave maker award for the impact of their work • employment of a care leaver to work within Social Services Department and link in with the Corporate Parenting team. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to improve the quality of advice, guidance and support given by the council's Early Years Advisory service to pre-registration applicants • to enable opportunities for children with special educational needs and children with disabilities to participate in consultation exercises. See comments aside • to act upon the recommendations of the Joint Inspectorates inspection of the Youth Offending Service, particularly in relation to expanding interventions for ethnic minority young people and the Youth Inclusion & Support Panels identifying the needs of ethnic minority groups.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support given to care leavers to help them achieve • no colleges with an inadequate 6th form • proportion of care leavers within EET at age 19 has been consistently very good for 4 years. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to clarify the 13 – 19 strategy in relation to the range of activities and partnerships currently in existence • to ensure there are sufficient vocational opportunities available for pupils.

Service management

The council has just appointed its Cabinet Lead Member and Director of Children's Services (designate) who will now take the lead in integrating children's services in accordance with Every Child Matters. It has been a conscious decision by the council to take a measured approach to implementing the changes and it has wanted to ensure it has a firm foundation in place before progressing further.

The Local Preventative Strategy and the multi-agency Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership are the basis for current practice. A Leicestershire Children and Young Persons Services Board has been created and will produce a single, outcome led, Children and Young Persons Plan. The authority has collaborated closely with relevant partner agencies in taking its first steps in its new direction of travel. Plans have been made to engage with children and young people, initially via a survey.

Strategically and at an operational level both social care and education can demonstrate partnership arrangements with a range of stakeholders, a clear understanding of where they wish to go and what they want to achieve. The council can demonstrate a range of good quality, safe services that seek to promote the welfare of children and young people. In general, educational attainment is good and there are a range of support systems in place to help children and young people achieve. Diversity and anti-discriminatory practices are established within school programmes and social care settings.

In terms of capacity, the council is able to attract a range of initiatives and central government support into the authority. Partnership working with a range of statutory, voluntary and community organisations is well used to deliver services. As an identified council priority both education and social care have received year on year financial growth and support via the budget settlement.

The 2004 Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) report commented that 'the council has capable staff, management and senior members, that there are strong senior managers with proven capabilities in strategic and service planning evidenced by the extent to which these approaches are working in education, social services (and property services)'.

Performance management is strongly embedded within the culture of the authority and is used by the authority in its partnership working with schools. The use of performance management information has been used to inform social care practice. This was further confirmed in the CPA.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review:

Staying safe

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

- the quality and effectiveness of the Early Years advice, guidance and support service in relation to the number of pre-registration actions imposed by Ofsted.

Children and young people are provided with a safe environment:

- progress with the completion and implementation of Equality Impact Assessments within children's services.

Enjoying and achieving

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

- ensuring permanently excluded pupils receive 20+ hours of tuition.

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

- performance at Key Stage 4.
- to continue to challenge the reasons for low Value Added where it is below average from Key Stage 2 to GCSE or equivalent.

Achieving economic well-being

Action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is planned and delivered in a coordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16-19) is of good quality:

- ensuring sufficient vocational opportunities available to all pupils.

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: Leicestershire County Council

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	4
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
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 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