



Making Social Care  
Better for People



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and  
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**1 December 2005**

Dear Colleagues

**ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL'S  
EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005**

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 25 July 2005 to discuss the performance of the education and children's social care services in the city 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 the issues we raised at the meeting.

**Being healthy**

Outcomes for children are satisfactory. Arrangements for joint working between agencies have been strengthened with the development of models of integrated service delivery and a range of mechanisms for involving children and young people in the design and delivery of services. Partnerships are striving to develop an approach that supports consistency across the city but is responsive to the diverse needs of the communities within the city. A recent signposting service, developed in partnership with the Children Fund, has contributed to quicker and easier access arrangements for children and young people. Child and adolescent mental health services are being developed through a comprehensive and systematic plan that seeks to provide a single point of access for all children and young people. The health care of looked after children is promoted well through good levels of health checks and support to carers. There has been a recent upward trend of under-18 teenage conceptions across the city and not all schools comply with the statutory requirements for sex and relationships education. A range of services to promote healthy lifestyles is provided to a good level in most schools. However, this does not yet reach children who are not in school or engage fully with parents and carers. Preventative services to support children and their families in the community are at an early stage of development. There are

weaknesses in the provision of services to improve the health of children with disabilities.

## **Staying safe**

Safeguarding of children and young people is improving and is now satisfactory. This has been a matter of serious concern for the last three years. A comprehensive improvement strategy, including involvement of an external support team, has led to increased consistency in the quality of front line practice. The Birmingham Area Child Protection Committee is now more effective. Inter-agency child protection work is supported through joint funding of a senior police officer and a range of links with religious and community groups, and with leisure and sport groups. Revised performance management and scrutiny processes have increased compliance with child protection procedures, improved management oversight of casework decisions and more effective joint working at the front line. Thresholds for services have been revised. This has resulted in more consistent decisions and has contributed to children being referred for assessments more effectively. The time taken to complete initial and core assessments has been reducing steadily since December 2004. Compliance with child protection procedures and provision for children's welfare, health and safety in schools is at a good level.

Despite a small increase in numbers of looked after children, placement stability for children is good for both short and long term placements. Security of relationships has increased through increased numbers of adoptions. Good support is provided to adopters. The needs of children from Black and minority ethnic communities are met through good matching of children and carers and through targeted recruitment of carers from those communities. Although the fostering service provides a good standard of safe care for children and young people, the quality of care and safeguarding arrangements in residential placements is not consistently good enough.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

Outcomes are good. Inspection shows strengths in nursery education. The council has reported that the number of child-care settings in which actions are required have reduced over the past year. Both attainment and attendance have shown steady gains. At the ages of 7, 11 and 14, pupils' attainment is below national figures but in line with those in similar areas. GCSE results, for the last three years have also been in line with national averages and above those from similar areas. Despite these strengths, the progress made by pupils between the end of Key Stage 2 and the GCSE is below expectations. The education department has made supporting secondary education, particularly through the national Key Stage 3 strategy, a priority in its work. The work is strong in the way it builds the various strands of support available to the authority, through, for example the leadership incentive grant, building schools for the future and

the authority's professional development programme for its teachers into a coherent whole.

The attainment of female pupils from minority ethnic communities is better than that nationally. By contrast, it is lower for Black Caribbean and Pakistani boys. The education department has set up dedicated groups to develop strategies for dealing with under-achievement by specific groups of pupils. Schools have extended their success beyond academic attainment. Inspections have shown notably good attitudes among school pupils and that the schools are good at providing opportunities to enrich the curriculum and to extend educational experience beyond the school day.

The curriculum is also developing in other ways, for example, in the growth of vocational provision. Joint working arrangements between education, social care and health have been strengthened and are delivering some increased support for children's education and leisure activities. Services to support the education of children with disabilities are starting to improve. The speed of completion of statements of special educational need, which was poor at the time of the last inspection, has improved considerably.

The educational attainment of looked after children is higher than the council's comparator group at the level of one or more GCSE passes at A-G and for those achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A-C. However the numbers of children entered for examinations is low compared to the council's comparator group. Services to support the education of looked-after children have been developed on a multi-agency basis through the LACES team. However support provided to children and young people who are in residential accommodation and, in particular those who have been excluded, is variable."

### **Making a positive contribution**

This area is good. Children and young people are consulted and actively encouraged to participate in planning and decision-making in various ways in all social care and education services. They have direct contact with officers at both strategic and operational levels and with councillors through the Children and Young Person's Partnership Forum. Councillors have increased their scrutiny of care in residential provision. Satisfaction levels of children looked after are high. However, there is a low level of satisfaction of other children in need. Citizenship is promoted in schools and pupils' spiritual, social and cultural development is promoted well. The level of offending behaviour is declining. In particular, there have been reductions in numbers of first time offenders and in recidivism. Specific services support participation of children with disabilities and those from black and ethnic minorities. There is innovative practice in the provision of bereavement counselling. Other evidence of good outcomes includes improved design of a residential home for children with disabilities and a peer-

mentoring project for looked after children. However, the satisfaction of children in need with the services provided is variable.

## **Achieving economic well-being**

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. Inspection shows that the quality of school sixth forms is good as are the standards achieved by their students, as measured by average point scores. The authority takes the view that the proportion of 16-19 year olds not in employment, education or training requires reductions but cannot quantify this because until now because of the lack of reliable data. The youth service is, however, making a valuable contribution to this work through a range of provision, including the provision of personal advisers and the fieldwork of detached youth workers. Provision to support young people with disabilities on transition beyond the years of compulsory schooling is unsatisfactory, but is now being made a higher priority by the local authority. It remains the case, however, that the level of direct payments for this group of young people and their parents is low.

The proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training has recently increased. Partnership working to support young people moving into independence is strong but has yet to lead to the improved accommodation that the authority recognises is necessary and which the young people themselves, have raised with the authority as an issue.

Plans are in place to strengthen partnership working and services to support children and young people moving into independent living. However these are yet to be translated into improved outcomes for all children in need. The engagement of care leavers in education, training and employment has improved significantly this year but levels of support for independent living and quality of accommodation are inconsistent. Transition pathways and protocols have been agreed across most service groups. However, services to support young people with disabilities and their families and to promote choice and independence are at a low level.

The development of the 14-19 curriculum in collaboration with the LLSC has strong features. Area-wide inspection has shown that the local joint-working between schools and their neighbourhood further education colleges is productive in broadening the curriculum available to young people in their local areas.

## SUMMARY

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for improvement</b>
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• good performance on health assessments of children looked after</li> <li>• development of integrated child and adolescent mental health service</li> <li>• involvement of children and young people in design and development of services.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• preventative services for children and their families are at an early stage</li> <li>• development of services for children with disabilities</li> <li>• school governing bodies' compliance with statutory duties in matter of sex and relationships</li> <li>• access to services promoting healthy lifestyles needs to be extended to include children and young people out-of school and to engage their parents and carers.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improved quality of front line assessment practice</li> <li>• compliance with child protection procedures in schools</li> <li>• effectiveness of Area Child Protection Committee and Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements</li> <li>• adoption service provides effective support for adopters</li> <li>• foster carers provide safe care for looked after children</li> <li>• placements for looked after children are responsive to needs relating to culture and ethnicity.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quality of care and safeguarding of children in residential care</li> <li>• sustain improvement in performance on time scales initial and core assessments</li> <li>• management information relating to profile of young people leaving care.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improvements in attainment and attendance</li> <li>• increased speed in the completion of statements of special educational need</li> <li>• pupils' attitudes in school</li> <li>• opportunities for enrichment and learning beyond the school day</li> <li>• improvements in the support for looked after children.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• number of looked after children entered for examinations is low.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• signposting services for children and young people</li> <li>• children and young person's partnership forum established</li> <li>• citizenship is actively promoted in most schools</li> <li>• innovations include peer-mentoring and bereavement counselling service</li> <li>• youth crime is falling through reduction of first-time offenders and recidivism</li> <li>• range of initiatives to support participation of children and young people with diverse needs and backgrounds.</li> <li>• improved scrutiny of residential services</li> <li>• satisfaction levels of looked after children is high.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• low level of satisfaction of children in need supported in the community.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quality of school sixth forms and the standards achieved by their students</li> <li>• development of the 14-19 curriculum in collaboration with the LLSC</li> <li>• recent increase in the proportion of care leavers in employment, education or training</li> <li>• partnership working to support looked after young people moving to independence.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provision of support for young people in need with disabilities.</li> </ul>

## Service management

The prospects for improvement in this authority are good. The key strength is the strategic direction provided by councillors and managed by officers. Progress towards the development of integrated children's services has been relatively slow. There is a clear and corporate priority and commitment to integrating services for children, but the authority has had to give its main priority to improving the quality of social care for children. It has yet to succeed in raising bringing that quality to the level it is at in education, but it has overcome the severe shortcomings which were evident until recently.

The process has been helped by the authority's effective performance management system and by the realignment of its budget so that it now reflects more accurately its priorities for improving the delivery of services. It has also been able to build on its knowledge of its own strengths and weaknesses. Our discussion with you, as well as our scrutiny of your planning documents, have provided evidence of this. The self-assessment completed for the current annual performance assessment was variable. Some aspects failed to specify weaknesses particularly in relation to economic well-being and service management.

There also aspects of the work which need further improvement. At an operational level, budget management is weaker than it is strategically. Similarly, personnel management and practice do not promote good outcomes for children and the quality of residential care is not consistently good enough.

Nevertheless, although the movement toward integrated services has been slow at a strategic level, much progress has been made at an operational level. Collaboration between the authority's social care and education services has developed well, as has collaboration with other bodies. The improved support for looked after children and the development of the 14-19 curriculum are examples of the results of such collaboration. There is a very sound basis from which the authority can move forward.

## **Areas for exploration in the joint area review**

### **Being healthy**

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

- the provision and quality of services for children with disabilities.

### **Staying Safe**

*The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:*

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

- the progress on development and effectiveness of Safeguarding Board
- the extent and effectiveness of joint working between services.

## **Enjoying and achieving**

*Early years provision promotes children's development and well-being and helps them meet early learning goals:*

- the distribution of early years provision and the extent to which it meets local needs.

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

- secondary education: progress in attainment from the end of Key Stage 2
- secondary education: patterns of low attainment.

## **Making a positive contribution**

*Children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting the community:*

- the views of children and young people about services they receive.

## **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:*

- the 14-19 curriculum in the context of its local organisation through FE colleges and groups of schools.

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

- post-16 provision and transition for pupils with special educational needs
- the support for young people with disabilities in proceeding towards independent living.



## 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: Birmingham City Council

Areas for judgement	Final judgements <sup>1</sup>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	<b>2</b>
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	<b>3</b>
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	<b>2</b>
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	<b>3</b>

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### 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