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Making Social Care
Better for People



Mr David Pettitt
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Dear Mr Pettitt

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 4 July 2005 to assess the performance of the education and 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. The performance indicator shows that the health needs of looked after children are being met effectively. This was evident during the fostering inspection which confirmed that each child had a medical record card with identified health needs, such as specialist appointments and immunisation dates. Further comments received from children confirmed that their health needs were being met and that they felt they were 'eating more healthily'. For children in the 14+ group health needs are monitored by their personal advisers who have a specific role to help support young peoples' health needs, including advice regarding relationships and sexual health.

There is evidence of good joint working in most areas between education, social care, the primary care trust, other health professionals and the police. An innovation resulting from joint working has been the production of the Children's Scorecard, a document to analyse and plan services for children which takes into consideration children's health needs.

The council has established both a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) commissioning and an operational group. A multi-disciplinary integrated support team works with children presenting with difficult challenges, and also provides support to families.

The instance of teenage pregnancies has declined by 15% since 1998 and is below that of neighbouring authorities.

Integrated work is continuing and improving with the processing of referrals through four GP practices. This has allowed the council to engage with GP's in a new way. A common referral form has been devised which has facilitated faster access.

All schools are involved with the healthy schools initiative. The council are working in close collaboration with the police to prevent substance misuse and bullying in schools. Inspection evidence showed that all schools were at least satisfactory or above for encouraging participation in sport.

Participation in sporting activities has been successful through the sport partnership programme which is with the co-operation with Sport England, which involves all schools on the island.

Staying safe

Outcomes in this area are now satisfactory. All children's services directorate staff have undertaken exercises to raise awareness of the five outcomes headings in Every Child Matters and have assessed their progress and responsibility for achieving staying safe outcomes. The council has engaged with its partners to improve this outcome and is doing so effectively. A joint local preventative strategy highlights the overall vision and priorities identified during the year but lacks sufficient detail on the implementation of the strategy. The strategy is designed to work in conjunction with the children and families balanced scorecard which will eventually inform the single children and young people's plan.

A previous consultation exercise with children identified bullying as a problem the council and partner agencies are taking steps to address this through a range of activities such as the planned helpline for children. Similarly the council has engaged with police and other partners to produce a local children's safeguarding board toolkit. The council together with its partners has also developed an information sharing protocol to ensure that children who may be at risk are appropriately identified and referred at an early stage.

There are some aspects regarding responses to children and family referrals and assessments (initial and core) that require the council's attention. Following the introduction of succinct eligibility criteria, there is now a clear referral system in place and subsequently the amount of referrals have reduced. This has led to the percentage of referrals of children in need now being in line with those in similar areas, but the percentage of those leading to an initial assessment has decreased considerably and is now significantly below the average of these areas.

For those referrals which do receive an initial assessment there has been an improvement in the timeliness, so that the percentage of initial assessments carried out within the target timescale is now above their comparator group and national averages. However the council will need to ensure that the correct referrals are having an initial assessment and that these are thorough enough to reduce the amount of re-referrals occurring as this rate is about a third higher than the average for those in similar areas. Alongside this a high

number of core assessments per 10,000 were carried out (higher than similar area/England averages). The percentage of these completed within target timescales although better than last year was still considerably below the average of the IPF comparator group.

The council had recognised the need to review some of these issues and have established a multi faceted action plan that includes staff training and improved data capture to address them.

All Child Protection cases are allocated but during 2004/05 there has been a drop in the percentage of Child Protection reviews carried out on time, from very good to acceptable performance. This is due to a low cohort and the drop of 3% represents two children. The performance indicator relating to the duration on the Child Protection Register indicated in 2004/5 the council's performance had improved and children were not staying on the register too long, however this indicator needs to be understood in the context of the high rate of re-registration on the Isle of Wight. This performance indicator has been at an unacceptable level for the last 3 years. The council explain that this is, at least in part, due to the small cohort of children and that those children were part of large sibling groups, nevertheless they are putting in some new training to ensure that staff are skilled in this area of decision making. The council advised that all Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) agencies are to audit and review their effectiveness in supporting children, young people and families post de-registration.

Most schools have Child Protection procedures in place reflecting the revised ACPC policy and only one secondary school of four inspected was found not to comply.

Some of the council's work with children who are looked after was very good. The stability of placements, the percentage of children in foster placements or place for adoption and the rate of school attendance were all commendable.

The council has identified that they have insufficient foster carers and suitable adoptive parents. This inhibits placement choice and suitable matching for foster children and children placed for adoption. The percentage of children who are looked after who are adopted from the councils care is low compared to the comparator group. Nevertheless there has been an increase in the percentage of children looked after placed for adoption to year 2005 such that the percentage is now only slightly lower than the average in similar areas and the percentage of children looked after adopted during the year that they were placed for adoption within 12 months of best interest decision made is better than the similar area average. These outcomes are linked to tighter permanency planning.

The authority has taken steps to ensure that foster carers are provided with training in safeguarding children from abuse. In order to improve the shortfalls in service the council is reorganising both its fostering and adoption services, into two teams with specific posts; reviewing placements and placement breakdown, and recruitment and retention of carers.

They are also negotiating with an independent foster care provider to improve choice for emergency placements.

The percentage of looked after children aged under 10 placed with parents is high at 18.3% in comparison to their comparator group which is 12%.

A very small cohort of children from black and minority ethnic communities has had a disproportionate effect on the ratio of children in need in comparison to the local population. This has led to the council not doing as well as their comparator group average. Whilst the council has recognised the complexities of addressing diversity with a small cohort, work is still in progress to assess the impact of their policies on promoting race equality for children and at present there is insufficient evidence of targeted action to promote their well being.

Enjoying and achieving

The outcomes in this area are inadequate although there are some good areas of performance, for aspects of early years provision and performance at the end of Key Stage 1. However, the low levels of achievement for pupils in schools and the lack of significant and sustained progress over five years, means that overall outcomes in this area are below minimum requirements.

In the Early Years Services, whilst the number of providers has decreased, there has been an increase in the number of places available. The extent to which the council prepares new providers for registration is good, but inspections found that sessional day care was noticeably weak in the standards associated with care, learning and play.

Key Stage 1 outcomes are good and show that there has been steady improvement since 2002. In maths, performance is now higher than similar authorities and national performance. In Key Stage 2, there has been a rise in performance in English and maths but, despite this, these results are still below that found in similar authorities and nationally. In science, results are in line with similar authorities and nationally.

Standards achieved at Key Stage 3 in English at level 5+ are weak and have been consistently lower than similar authorities and national performance since 2001/02, whilst in maths and science it is below similar authorities and in line nationally. At GCSE, pupil performance is poor and has failed to reach the levels of similar authorities over the last 4 years. This performance is reflected in the low value added progress scores between Key Stage 2 and GCSE. One of the four high schools recently inspected was found to be unsatisfactory in overall effectiveness, and two of the 12 primary schools were found to be unsatisfactory. Eight of the primary schools were judged good or very good.

Pass rates for some vulnerable groups are poor but there has been an improvement in the percentage of young people leaving care with 1 GCSE although this is still below average

for the IPF comparator group. Absolute numbers in these groups are low so there can be wide variation year by year.

Attendance is broadly in line with similar authorities, although authorised absence in primary schools is above similar authorities and national comparisons. There has been good improvement in reduced absence rates for looked after children recently and these rates are significantly better than those of statistical neighbours. Exclusions are well managed, leading to particularly good outcomes at secondary level. Pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools, however, are over-represented for exclusions. There are also excessive numbers of excluded pupils who remain in alternative provision for more than a year. Whilst this is part of the LEA strategy, there is potential conflict between these pupils being out of school and the council's commitment to inclusion.

The council has a clear awareness of the problems in raising standards. It has considered the recommendations of independent consultants to move from the current 3-tier school system to a 2-tier one, where broader curriculum choice will be available, but has decided to retain the current 3-tier system. This presents particular challenges in raising standards at Key Stages 3 and 4, where breadth of curriculum is restricted in the middle schools.

There are signs of good response to the agenda of the 2004 Children Act, with a new Director of Children's Services and changes being driven by the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership. These changes can be seen in corporate planning processes and in the debate by schools on how they can address the five outcomes.

Making a positive contribution

Overall, the council's performance in this area is good. One area that has shown significant improvement is the reduction in final warnings and reprimands of looked after children, which has moved from a low base to being above the IPF comparator group and national average.

The self-assessment shows that the council has an understanding and awareness of issues that they need to confront to successfully engage with young people. This is being followed through with targeted actions to improve the ways in which young people feel involved in the planning of their futures.

The annual Wight 2 B Heard Conference is a good example of multi-agency work to gather the views of young people. As part of this year's conference, the council has been proactive in tackling bullying. Another example is the Big Day Out which is an annual consultation event funded by the Children Fund. The Big Day Out targets children, young people and their families from our most disadvantaged communities. They are invited to enjoy a free day in an Island amusement park or attraction that includes free travel, entry and rides. Most schools on the island also have a schools council.

For more vulnerable groups, a care leaver has been appointed to assist with the work of looked after children and those leaving care. For children with learning difficulties and disabilities the council has viewpoint in place which is used to evaluate all Children and Families supported projects. The council is using "Draw and Write" techniques to encourage participation of children. Children who are looked after are able to contribute their views through their annual reviews.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. Two sixth forms were recently inspected and one was found to be satisfactory, the other good. Performance based on average point scores for GCE, VCE and A/AS levels is below the national average and the gap is widening. The 2003 inspection of 14-19 services judged overall effectiveness to be satisfactory, but judged the strategy to be unsatisfactory. Since then, the local authority has worked closely with the local Learning and Skills Council and Connexions Service to improve provision and these actions are appropriate and targeted on agreed areas of weakness. The local area review, leading to more integrated transition to post-16 education and training opportunities, provides a stronger base for improved outcomes and early signs of improvement outcomes can be seen already.

The percentage of 16-19 year-olds Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) has been successfully reduced to 3.5% and there have been significant improvements in the percentage of unknown destinations of school leavers. The percentage of care leavers in employment, education, or training is in the highest banding and the overall number of children and young people not in employment, education or training fell significantly between 2002 and 2004. Whilst targets have been met, performance has deteriorated very recently and there are challenges in continuing to maintain progress.

Within the Youth Justice Board Area, which includes the Isle of Wight, the number of young offenders who re-offend is above the national average. Appropriate action is being taken to address this.

The council was making a good response to disabled children and their families in 2004/05. Direct payments for disabled children were well above the average of their comparator group. In the census week the percentage of disabled children (other than children who are looked after) who received some form of service from social services was commendably twice the average of similar areas.

Summary

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there has been a steady improvement in the health of children looked after. The council is in the highest banding • good joint working with Education, the Primary Care Trust and the police • the children's scorecard • reduction in the number of teenage pregnancies. 	
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is joint partnership with the police to prevent bullying which includes a 24/7 helpline. The police have also responded to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) toolkit, which was recently launched, as the council are working for the transition from an Area Child Protection Committee to a LSCB • a safer communities partnership was re-established in December 2004 and will play a key role in the staying safe outcome • following the introduction of eligibility tiers there has been improvement in more timely responses on initial assessments and improvement in core assessments although they are still below the comparator group • 98% of children are allocated to a named qualified social worker • all children's services directorate staff have undertaken exercises to raise awareness of the five outcome headings in Every Child Matters and have assessed their progress and responsibility for staying safe • de-registration of children on the child protection register has improved significantly. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rate of re-referral within 12 months • data recording/cleansing • choice and matching of placements in fostering/adoption • re-registrations of children on the register • referral and assessment process • further improvement required on core assessments.

<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improvements with looked after children absent from school • performance at Key Stage 1. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attainment at KS2 • value from KS2 to GCSE and KS3 to GCSE • attainment at KS3 and at KS4 • lack of sustained improvement over time • attainment of looked after children • attainment of care leavers • high % of excluded pupils remaining with alternative provision for over a year.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all schools have school councils • the annual Wight 2B Heard Conference is a multi-agency sponsored event that provides a forum for the voice of young people • a youth council operates throughout the island with elected representation which direct access to the council • the children's fund event targeted rural and disadvantaged areas of the island • various activities, surveys and interactive computer games (Viewpoint survey) • final warnings and reprimands. 	
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16-19 in NEET fell from 5.8% in 2002 to 3.5% in 2004. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performance at GCE, VCE and A/AS levels • post-16 developments and joint work with the local Learning and Skills Council.

Service Management

Management of the children's services is adequate, with some strengths but also areas for development. There is a very clear assessment of strengths and weaknesses. There is also sound financial management and good performance on issues such as the management of school places. There are actions in place to provide improved performance management and the children and families balanced scorecard is an emerging example of this. Less satisfactory are the systems for prioritisation, where the priorities matrix and the process of getting shared agreement on priorities falls short of the intense focus required

if the outcomes for children and young people are to improve significantly in the near future. Nevertheless, the current work on the production of the Single Children and Young People's Plan is an important new building block for improved outcomes.

There are clear responses to the agenda of Every Child Matters, such as the appointment of a Director of Children's Services and the drive to bring health, social care and education and training into closer alignment. Some of these actions are moving ahead at a good rate of progress. What is still lacking is evidence of how actions for universal services are having impact on the five outcomes.

There are above average rates of teachers leaving posts but unfilled teacher vacancies are in line with national figures. The LEA is working satisfactorily to fill vacancies and to maintain the necessary number of teachers to drive up standards.

Overall, the capacity of the council for further improvements to children's services is adequate.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

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

- Seek evidence of joint working with health on a strategic and operational level.

Staying safe

Children and young people are provided with a safe environment:

- Need evidence of impact of strategy for tackling bullying.

Enjoying and achieving

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

- Evidence needed of impact of strategy on raising achievement at Key stages 3 and 4.

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

- Seek evidence of reduction of high percentage of excluded pupils in alternative provision for more than one year.

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:

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

- Ensure that minority groups have their voices heard.

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:

- Seek confirmation of a good and effective 14-19 strategy.

Final judgements

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

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY
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Office for Standards in Education



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

APA final judgements 2005: Isle of Wight 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	2
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	1
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	2
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	2

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