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Mr Jim Gould
Director of Learning and Care (Children's Services)
Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Town Hall
St Ives Road
Maidenhead
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Dear Mr Gould

2007 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

This letter summarises the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment for your local authority. The judgements in the letter draw on your review of the Children and Young People's Plan, your action plan arising from the 2005 joint area review (JAR) and the evidence and briefings provided by Ofsted, other inspectorates and relevant bodies. The letter comments on progress since the recent JAR. 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.

Overall effectiveness of children's services

Grade 3

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead consistently delivers above minimum requirements. Although, in the year following the JAR the pace of change was slow, the impact of the revised structure for children's services and the appointment of new senior staff have improved outcomes for children and young people in the last year. The council has responded positively to the recommendations made in the JAR.

The council is accurate in assessing the quality of its services and, with the exception of being healthy, the contribution the council makes towards improving outcomes for children and young people are good. In particular, outcomes for achieving economic well-being have improved and there have been significant developments in the range and breadth of vocational provision available to all young people between the ages of 14 and 16. Although aspects of health are good, overall the council's contribution to improving this outcome remains adequate. A key priority for the coming year is

the implementation of an integrated Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Being healthy

Grade 2

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is adequate. Four recommendations emerged from the JAR.

For immediate action

- CAMHS should ensure that systems are developed for communicating the outcome and progress of referrals.

For action in the next six months

- The council and its partners should develop a comprehensive CAMHS strategy that ensures a fully integrated, multi professional specialist CAMHS team is in place, with robust assessment and referral processes.
- The council and its partners should ensure that all assessed children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have multi-agency care plans and an identified key worker coordinating their care
- The Primary Care Trust (PCT) should review the provision of therapy services to ensure that they are sufficient to meet the assessed needs of children and young people within the borough.

While CAMHS at tiers 1 and 2 remain good, the longstanding problems identified in the JAR report are, still evident. The council acknowledges that limited progress has been made and has set in place actions to address the outstanding issues which remain at tiers 3 and 4. The most important of these is the development of a detailed service specification for a comprehensive CAMHS. This will be used to underpin the tendering process and in the appointment of a new provider by April 2009. The draft specification rightly includes performance management conditions that hold the provider services to account for service delivery. The commissioning structures, within the council and the PCT have been aligned to ensure agreed priorities between the partners. In addition, a multi-disciplinary board has been created to contribute to the effective re-commissioning of the health elements of specialist CAMHS and to assure long-term progress. The current provider recognises the need to include the existing range and improve the quality of service. The council has established regular meetings with senior staff at Berkshire Healthcare Trust to drive immediate improvements and performance manage existing services during the interim period.

In the past 12 months, the council has continued to improve its performance in the promotion of healthy lifestyles in a range of ways. Ofsted inspection reports show that childcare settings and schools are doing well in promoting healthy lifestyles. Almost half the schools in the borough have achieved National healthy Schools status.

Well coordinated partnership work with health professionals is making a real difference to outcomes for some of the more vulnerable children and young people. For example, the school nursing team is increasingly active in schools in delivering Personal, Social Health Education and Sexual Relationship Education. A key part of this work is the targeting of children who are looked after by the council and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is a high level of provision to ensure that parents and carers receive support to keep their children healthy. This work is being extended as the roll out of integrated teams providing locally-based services continues although it will be less secure if the pressures on the health visiting service continue.

Dedicated arrangements to meet the health needs of looked after children are in place and performance in this area is consistently above that of statistical neighbours and the national average. Looked after children demonstrably benefit from having an integrated health plan which leads to the identification of health needs, access to treatment and to good outcomes.

Good, focussed, work to tackle substance misuse and to promote sexual health has been undertaken in a range of settings. Evidence shows impact with low rates of Chlamydia infection and a falling rate of teenage conceptions. The number of conceptions amongst 15–17 year olds per 1000 population is consistently significantly lower than nationally. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have benefited from an increasing range of support but the absence of an integrated strategic approach to commissioning has prevented the full development of the service.

Area(s) for development

- The areas for action which formed the recommendations in the JAR remain the priority areas for further development.

Staying safe

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. One recommendation emerged from the joint area review.

For immediate action

- The Area Child Protection Committee should be appropriately resourced so that it can introduce satisfactory systems for monitoring the overall effectiveness of the child protection system.

The formation of the new Learning and Care Directorate and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has given impetus to a significant drive to increase awareness of child protection across the partnership. A strategy for monitoring the overall effectiveness of child protection systems was developed, agreed and implemented by the LSCB in July 2006. A wide range of information is available in different media and formats to ensure that avoidable risks to the safety of children and young people are minimised. There is good evidence of impact, for example the early achievement of national targets for a reduction in serious injury and child deaths in road accidents. School, childcare and other inspection reports show that good numbers of children are adopting safe behaviours in their personal lives.

The rate of child protection referrals and repeat referrals are low in comparison to those found nationally. A high percentage (74%) proceed to initial assessment, indicating that service thresholds are understood across the partnership. Achieving this understanding has been central to the recent work undertaken in preparation for the launch of the Common Assessment Framework. Performance in completing initial assessments within statutory timescales is above statistical neighbours and despite a significant increase in the number of core assessments, completion rates are very high.

This work has resulted, as predicted by the council, in a significant increase in initial child protection conferences and subsequent registrations. It represents significant improvement in the partnerships ability to recognise and respond to safeguarding issues. The percentage of re-registrations (19%) has also increased as a result of this work. The rate of de-registration, although increasing, remains below that found nationally. All children on the child protection register are reviewed on time and are allocated to qualified and experienced social workers.

In contrast to the reducing national trend there are increasing numbers of children being looked after by the council. This rise is reflective of a council and its partners working with a renewed determination to ensure that all those who require care or protection services are identified. The council is now providing well for children with previously unmet needs. Some 28.8% of looked after children are placed in residential accommodation, a significantly higher percentage compared to nationally. This is largely attributable to the significantly complex needs of the children and young people accommodated. The stability of short term placements for children who are looked after is very good and the percentage of young people who had been looked after for two and a half years or more that had been in the same placement for at least two of those years is above the national average. This represents a significant increase over the last three years. A very low percentage of children are in placements with relatives or friends and the lowest national

percentage (54.1%) of children aged between 10 and 15 years are placed in foster care or for adoption. While the very recent Ofsted inspection of adoption judged services to be good with outstanding features, the development of services for children in the older age groups was highlighted as the key area for attention by the council.

The recent Ofsted inspection of the fostering service judged the Royal Borough to be outstanding and commended in particular the quality of planning and subsequent work with children, young people, their families and carers. These features contribute to the good performance in achieving stable placements for young people.

Children from Black and minority ethnic groups are over-represented on the child protection register and within the looked after children population although numbers are very small and skewed by children from large family groups. This is in marked contrast to the position that existed at the time of the JAR. Understanding of their specific needs requires further development to enable the provision of targeted preventative services.

Area(s) for development

- Develop further the ability to understand trends in demand for child protection services so that early identification and preventative services can be developed and implemented.
- Develop fostering and adoption services to reduce the numbers in residential care and to significantly improve the numbers of children aged 10–15 years in foster care or placed for adoption.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. Two recommendations emerged from the joint area review.

For action in the next six months

- The education director should ensure that senior managers have available, and use, data on the progress and attainment of the most vulnerable and the lowest attaining children and young people and identify the interventions and support that are needed. Such interventions should be regularly monitored and reviewed.

For action in the longer term

- Reduce the number of children and young people with specific and complex needs who receive services located outside their own

communities and mainstream schools, so that they can access high quality provision close to home.

There has been significant improvement in the use of data to track children and young people including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities since the joint area review. The council's ambition is to improve the life chances of all children and young people through higher attainment. Data analysis is focused on this with a clear view to narrowing the attainment gap. In particular, the local authority has prioritised the achievement of boys in writing and the achievement of children and young people of Pakistani origin. They have been working effectively to support schools in order to address these and good improvement can be seen particularly in the percentage of boys achieving a Level 4 or above in writing at the end of Key Stage 2.

Provision in early years and childcare is good particularly with regard to the quality of childminders. Children in nursery and Foundation Stage classes in schools receive very good teaching with a higher than national proportion of Foundation Stages being judged good or outstanding. The proportion of children meeting early learning goals in the two main areas of learning is in line with the national average and shows an improving trend. The quality of teaching in private and voluntary settings however is less secure. Progress is being made in implementing actions to improve this. A strength of the support is training that involves staff from maintained, private and voluntary settings which has encouraged the sharing of good practice and in particular allowed small providers to build capacity to improve.

The standards of attainment achieved by most children at all key stages continue to be above the national average. In particular, at GCSE the proportion of young people achieving five or more GCSE grades A*-C including English and mathematics is consistently well above the national average and has been improving over the last few years. However the percentage of young people that achieve at least one GCSE grade A*-G, although in line with the national average, is significantly lower than found in similar authorities and this has been identified as a key priority for improvement by the borough. Outcomes for Black and minority ethnic children and young people are in line with other groups with the exception of those of Pakistani origin. An extensive range of strategies to improve lower attainment for this group is in place including some innovative community outreach work. Provisional results for 2007 show that overall this support is beginning to pay dividends.

Most other vulnerable children and young people, for example those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and looked after children, make good progress compared with other similar groups nationally. Although a significant number of children and young people with specific and complex needs are still educated outside the Royal Borough the council has a successful bid in place to fund the rebuilding of Holyport Manor Special School. This will enable a higher proportion of children and young people to be educated closer to their home as well as providing a comprehensive range of extended and outreach services.

The overall effectiveness of the majority of schools is good or better. However, within this picture secondary schools and middle schools deemed secondary are judged less favourably with a significantly smaller proportion of those inspected being judged good or better than similar authorities and nationally. There are currently three schools with a notice to improve; a higher proportion than similar authorities and nationally. The school improvement team is working effectively to support schools including developing partnerships between strong schools and those that need more support.

Inspection evidence supported by results from the Tellus2 survey shows that the majority of children and young people enjoy school. This is reflected in good attitudes and behaviour and school attendance is consistently above that of the national average. Good working partnerships between the pupil referral unit and schools have led to an increased number of children and young people reintegrating into mainstream school.

There is a coordinated and integrated approach to supporting parents and the proportion of all schools delivering the full core offer for extended schools is well above the national interim target. The authority has a clear strategy for developing, and improving, recreational, leisure and cultural facilities which has been developed in consultation with children and young people. There is good targeted provision made through the youth service to ensure vulnerable young people are engaged.

Area(s) for development

- Increase the overall effectiveness of secondary and middle-deemed secondary schools.
- Increase the percentage of young people attaining one or more A*-G grades.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The strengths of the work identified at the time of the JAR remain. No recommendations emerged from the JAR.

Children and young people, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are actively encouraged to participate in making decisions that help shape local services. For example, children and young people were consulted on the council's strategic priorities in the Children and Young People's Plan and their views led to specific changes such as the way Connexions and the youth service publicise their services. The successful Youth Parliament elections attracted a 27% increase in voting.

There are a wide range of services on offer to support children and young people in developing socially and emotionally. Frequently, this is targeted towards those in most need. Over 80% of primary and middle schools have implemented the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme which is leading to improved social, emotional and behaviour skills in everyday school life. School inspection evidence shows that over 90% of schools are judged good, or better, in terms of making a positive contribution. Publicly funded youth services are good and reach a considerably higher percentage of young people aged 13–19 than nationally and in similar local authorities; even though the ratio of full-time youth workers to young people is lower than average.

There is a comprehensive range of support for parents and attendance at parenting courses is increasing year on year. In addition, the number of children benefiting from the Family Friends Family Support Worker service has more than doubled in the last year. The council actively targets provision towards families with increased levels of need. Services for foster carers are judged to be excellent. All looked after children were involved in making decisions about their own lives by participating in reviews and the council held a consultation with looked after children in order to ascertain their views on the Green Paper Care Matters.

The council's actions to prevent offending and re-offending and reduce anti-social behaviour in children and young people are having a positive impact. Attendance and school exclusion, figures are better than national and behaviour is judged as being good or better in over 90% of all schools. The authority has a multi-agency Youth Inclusion Support Panel to identify children and young people at risk of offending or anti-social behaviour and provides tailor-made interventions. The Youth Service has been particularly successful in engaging young people at risk of, or involved in, anti-social behaviour and provides purposeful activities which increase their self-esteem and respect for others. A good example of this is the Get Active programme, which is targeted at 8–13 year olds at risk of social exclusion. The target to reduce the number of first-time entrants to the Youth Justice system by 5% by March 2008 has been met and greatly exceeded. Re-offending rates are in line with similar authorities and the number of young people going into custody is very low. The Youth Offending Team works well to ensure there is positive rehabilitation into the community for those leaving custody in addition to delivering focused programmes and working directly with parents of offenders.

Area(s) for development

- Further develop opportunities for all groups of children and young people to influence the work of the council.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. Three recommendations emerged from the JAR.

For action in the next six months

- The Connexions service, schools and partners should improve access to impartial information, advice and guidance to all children and young people on the full range of options available to them at age 16.

For action in the longer term

- Improve access to post-16 provision at levels below advanced level, including for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Provide access to a broader range of vocational options for young people aged 14 and above.

Pre-publication

The council has responded positively to the issues identified by the JAR. The range of vocational provision has broadened and all secondary schools now offer some vocational courses at Key Stages 4 and 5. There have been some good initiatives by individual providers to extend, and enhance, the 14-19 curriculum. A good example of this is the work of the Maidenhead Federation of Schools. Alternative curriculum provision is being enhanced by the pilot Key Stage 4 Engagement Project, combining vocational opportunities and extended work related learning. The newly established East Berkshire Skills Centre is providing vocational provision in construction, hair-dressing and motor vehicle maintenance to 103 14–16 year olds from all but one of the borough's secondary schools in addition to a supporting a group of young apprentices.

There has been a revitalisation in partnership working in order to deliver the new 14-19 vocational diplomas. In particular, good collaboration exists with neighbouring local authorities, in particular Slough and Bracknell Forest, in order to maximise provision and avoid duplication. Schools and colleges are more enthusiastic to be involved and there is an increased awareness of the need for partnerships. There is, however, a need to ensure that curriculum planning is clearly based on local skills needs and the demand from young people. There is easily accessible impartial information available to help young people make sound choices at age 14 and 16. A local prospectus of 16+ provision is available through the Berkshire Opportunities (BOPS) website which now includes opportunities for 14–16 year olds. In addition, the Connexions service work well with schools to support the delivery of high quality information, advice and guidance about learning post-16. In particular, intensive personal advisers work with vulnerable young people such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are experiencing multiple barriers to engaging with and/or accessing education, employment and training.

The Royal Borough has very high rates of young people staying in education and training post-16 and the proportion is above both the national average and those of similar authorities. Ambitious targets have been set for 2010 with initiatives in place to develop all young people's engagement. The proportion of young people not in employment, education or training is low, in particular for groups of vulnerable young people including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and teenage mothers. However of the cohort of five care leavers, four were not in education, training or employment on their 19th birthday. Joint planning has been developed between Connexions and the leaving care team to provide mentoring through the Princes Trust Mentoring Scheme for Care Leavers, work experience and information sharing for this small but vulnerable group of young people. Over the last three years there has been a consistent improvement in attainment both at Levels 2 and 3 by age 19. The percentage of young people completing an apprenticeship framework has more than doubled and is now close to the national average.

There are effective links between a range of multi-agencies in order to maximise families economic well-being. All young care leavers are in suitable accommodation.

One of six planned children's centres has recently opened with the others on track for designation by spring 2008. There is a wide range of adult, community and family learning on offer within the Borough with targeted provision in areas of need. A particular strength is the focused work in the Ellington area with the Mirpuri Pakistani community which has included setting up a community learning centre to engage local adults, most of them parents, to enhance their language and confidence skills. In addition, work is ongoing to establish a supplementary school and extend the community outreach work through partnership with the Islamic Trust and learning mentors from the community.

Area(s) for development

- Consolidate partnership working in order to further develop and enhance 14-19 provision across the area.
- Ensure that curriculum planning is clearly based on local skills needs and the demand from young people.

Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people

Grade 3

Summary of strengths and areas for development

The council's capacity to improve its services for children and young people is good, and its management of these services is good. Two recommendations emerged from the JAR.

For immediate action

- The Director of Social Services should ensure that the measurement of performance indicators in relation to assessment within social services follow the national guidance.
- The council should ensure that written procedures are in place identifying management responsibilities and clearance processes in relation to staff recruitment when issues arise in relation to criminal records bureau checks.

The creation of the new Directorate of Learning and Care in September 2006 has been a catalyst for driving forward improvements in services for children and young people. The Directorate provides increasingly strong and effective leadership for children's services and is consistent in its drive to provide high quality services for all children, in particular the most vulnerable, in order to improve their lives. All senior posts within the Directorate have been filled and the Children and Young People's Partnership brings together all those working in children's services in the council and partner agencies. There is a strong commitment to partnership working and Children's Trust arrangements are on track to be in place by April 2008. A number of

budgets are already aligned and there is county-wide working in many areas such as the Berkshire Adoption Service and the Connexions Service. Two area Children and Young People's Teams have been recently set up (Maidenhead and District, and Windsor, Ascot and District) to enable integrated services to better meet the specific needs of local communities. A Common Assessment Framework has been developed so that children and families can receive joined up support at the earliest opportunity.

In the last year, a single detailed assessment of children and young people's needs has taken place, drawing together all sources of evidence from the authority and partner organisations, in order to develop the priorities for the Children and Young Peoples Plan and focus partnership working. The needs analysis has allowed the council to identify gaps in provision and develop interventions and targeted support. Priorities are well targeted as a result of the needs analysis and through extensive consultation with young people, their parents and carers. The Children and Young Peoples' Plan has 14 strategic priorities focused on improving outcomes for all and specific actions where outcomes could be enhanced for potentially vulnerable children and young people. The areas for development identified in the JAR are embedded into the plan. The review of the plan and JAR actions are comprehensive, detailed and show that good progress is being made on all recommendations apart from some relating to health.

The council is however fully aware of current challenges. For example, some barriers to change in CAMHS have been identified and there was limited progress in developing formal joint commissioning arrangements due to organisational change across the partnership. The development of a joint commissioning strategy to underpin the Children's Trust arrangements is a key priority for 2007/08 and the council, and its partners, have responded by putting in place personnel and clear systems to drive outcomes forward.

Income and expenditure are broadly the same as in similar authorities and lower than nationally on average. Resources are used well and financial management is good. Medium-term financial planning is in place and planning for children's services includes a three-year capital programme. This includes the plans in place to develop Holyport Manor Special School and thus reduce out of borough placements.

There is an established performance management system in place which is being used throughout the Directorate of Learning and Care to evaluate performance. The Directorate is becoming increasingly data intelligent. However, there is potential to build further on this by improving data literacy amongst all staff groups to provide a culture of internal challenge and early identification of problems.

Area(s) for development

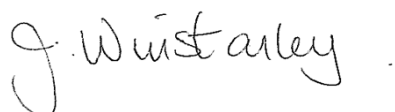
- Ensure that Children's Trust arrangements with a joint commissioning strategy are implemented.

- Improve data literacy amongst all staff groups in order to provide a culture of internal challenge and early identification of problems.

Overall the council has demonstrated good progress in meeting the joint area review recommendations and has shown good capacity to maintain and improve further its services for children and young people.

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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley".

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection

Pre-publication