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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Mr Lewis

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN ENFIELD COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment process for your local authority. The judgements reflect the outcomes of the joint area review (JAR) and the updated self-assessment provided by the council. We are grateful for the information that you provided to support this process and for the time that you and your colleagues have given to discussing relevant issues.

Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded ¹
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 overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	3
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	3

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Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Excellent / outstanding
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate

The London Borough of Enfield delivers a good service for children and young people. The council believes that the social circumstances of children and young people should not hinder their progress. Consequently, most of the services provided clearly point to the work they are undertaking to improve the quality of life and achievement of young people. However, the 2005 JAR highlighted the need to improve educational achievement and standards by ensuring greater consistency and rigour across all phases. It was also evident that more needs to be done for children in the early years settings, older pupils in the 14-19 phase and improving the transition and tracking arrangements for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in mainstream schools. Additionally, the review emphasised inconsistency in providing advice, guidance and support for children, parents and carers across the borough. The JAR pointed out that the draft anti-bullying policy had yet to have an impact on practice and there was insufficient attention to listening to children and young people's views. It was clear in the report that the strategy for recruitment and retention within social care was insufficiently robust, and there were inconsistencies in auditing and carrying out the mandatory checks. The council's updated self-assessment and action plan show steady progress on the JAR recommendations. The council shows good capacity to make further improvements.

School improvement work with senior and middle managers in schools has led to a sharper focus on improving specific subjects, notably science. The council effectively makes use of consultants, school improvement partners (SIPs), a range of intervention strategies and assessment data to improve performance. Although it is too early to fully evaluate the impact of intervention strategies, they are clearly targeted. Results are improving year on year from a low base and pupils' progress by the end of Key Stage 2 is good. However, the performance of care leavers and looked after children at the end of Year 11 with five or more GCSE grades A*- C is much lower than the national average for this group of vulnerable young people. The council has prioritised actions to improve the recruitment and retention of social care staff and to produce a commissioning strategy. The council's plans address performance areas relating to looked after children and when fully implemented, aim to deliver measurable improvement.

The council's Children and Young People's Plan, 'Promoting Positive Futures (2006-2009)', effectively embraces a broad vision that is also informed by the Enfield Strategic Partnership's Community Strategy. The council works effectively with various partners to meet the increasingly diverse needs of Enfield's community. Its priorities are well ordered and based on careful analysis of needs linked to the JAR report, the Local Area Agreement and the Change for Children Programme. The council has made significant investments to achieve its priorities. The council should set and monitor action plan timescales clearly. Nonetheless, it has good capacity to improve its services further. This confirms the judgement in the JAR report that the capacity for further improvement is good.

Being healthy

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is good. Three recommendations for action emerged from the JAR:

Immediate:

- improve the range of health-related information specifically for children and in community languages.

Next six months:

- resolve the capacity issues with maternity services at North Middlesex Hospital
- ensure better use of children's nurses in Accident and Emergency (A&E) at Chase Farm Hospital.

The council is working with the Primary Care Trust which has the lead role in health information. Initial plans are in place to produce a range of health information by March 2007 in key community languages, of which information specifically for children will be a part. At this stage a database of health care information has been developed and the council provides interim interpreting and translation services. Although these short-term arrangements ensure that a reasonably good translation service is provided, further work is planned to improve the interpreting services.

The council is working with both hospital trusts which have the lead roles in addressing the remaining issues. North Middlesex Hospital has completed the first stage of a midwifery staff review resulting in additional investment in named and other midwife posts. Paediatric and other training programmes and professional shadowing have been used to maximise children's nursing at Chase Farm Hospital A&E. Specialist recruitment will follow when vacancies arise. The council keeps the areas for improvement under review. Their plans adequately address the areas for improvement and when fully implemented, aim to ensure that all posts are filled.

Staying safe

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is good. Four recommendations for action emerged from the JAR:

Immediate:

- increase the effectiveness of strategies for recruiting and retaining social care staff
- review and strengthen arrangements to ensure necessary improvements are made to provide a consistent approach to Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks across the area.

Next six months:

- ensure that the named midwife at North Middlesex Hospital is given protected time to carry out her role in relation to child protection
- implement the draft anti-bullying strategy to ensure that all bullying incidents are recorded and acted upon appropriately.

The council has agreed a new workforce strategy for social care and an enhanced remuneration package targeted at social work practitioner and manager posts. Among front-line staff the percentage of agency staff has reduced from 22% in October 2005 to 12% in May 2006. The council exceeded its target to reduce the percentage of agency staff within a set time. This is a significant improvement in the recruitment and retention of permanent staff but needs continued attention.

The council takes the lead role on CRB practice through chairing the Local Safeguarding Board. Inconsistencies in practice within health agencies have been made clearer and the Board has received information from other partners. A position statement will be produced by the Board by end of July 2007. The target is a consistent multi-agency approach by 31 March 2007. The council has clear procedures to ensure compliance with safeguarding good practice and further action is planned to monitor and address gaps, if any, in the practice of collating information. This represents adequate progress at this stage.

The North Middlesex Hospital has the lead role in protecting time for the named midwife and has initially established an additional day a week of dedicated time for the named midwife to work on child protection issues. It is also conducting a wider review of midwifery staffing.

The council will implement a new reporting system for bullying incidents in September 2006, to be reported fully to governing bodies in September 2006. Schools and governing bodies were made aware of their responsibilities through a local anti-bullying conference in May 2006. The voluntary sector will lead a new anti-bullying helpline from September, while the 'Beat Bullying' initiative will work directly with schools.

While it is too early to evaluate fully the impact of all of these actions, all of them are appropriate. The council is right to have given high priority to critical challenges in the social care workforce and to specific capacity issues relating to child protection.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is good. The JAR highlighted four actions to be taken immediately:

- raise standards at Key Stage 1 and reduce the variability in standards between schools, especially secondary schools, across the borough
- increase the monitoring, challenge and support provided to early years settings
- provide consistent access to support and guidance on educational provision for pupils, parents and carers across the borough
- improve transition arrangements for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in mainstream schools.

The review also highlighted one action to be taken in the longer term:

- improve the range of accessible and affordable recreational and leisure activities available across the borough, ensuring that the views of children and young people are listened to when planning such provision.

The council has made a full response to the recommendations. A detailed action plan is in place to tackle underachievement. The plan covers a three-year period and includes a robust approach to identifying and remedying the causes of low standards and inconsistencies across the key stages in schools. It recognises the importance of strengthening the leadership and management skills of key staff who will be instrumental in leading the improvements. In addition, the plan includes references to tackling the communication, literacy and language needs of pupils at an early stage as an important step in raising standards. The plan covers the council's approach to monitoring, challenging and supporting staff across the phases. It outlines the approach to work with parents and the various structures and systems being set up to improve the transition for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in mainstream schools. The council has made less progress on its longer-term objectives to improve recreational and leisure facilities and will need to demonstrate this in due course.

Making a positive contribution

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is good. The JAR made one recommendation to be implemented within six months of the publication of the review:

- increase the opportunities for children and young people to influence council decision making.

The action plan addresses this area well. The council has drawn up a wide range of effective strategies to ensure that children and young people can become full participants in all stages of decision making. The council has taken action to involve the Children's Rights Officer to consult pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities about their views before their annual review and ensure that looked after children are involved in decision making.

Achieving economic well-being

The contribution that the council's services for children and young people make to improving outcomes in this area is good. The JAR highlighted one action to be taken immediately:

- extend collaboration between schools, colleges and work-based learning providers to tackle the shortcomings in post-16 provision and develop a learner entitlement for all young people aged 14-19.

Following the 2003 inspection of the 14-19 strategy, this area of work was re-inspected in 2005 and judged to have made reasonable progress in addressing the issues identified. The council has set up a 14-19 strategy group to monitor and implement the action plan. It has also embarked on developing partnership work with a range of other 14-19 providers. Various programmes and project work are underway such as the STAR programme and the Notschool project. Appropriate steps have been taken to improve the quality of information and guidance available to students; for example, through the Learner Offer and other means of distributing information. The 14 -19 Strategy Team has commissioned an audit, which is in several phases and will take into consideration the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Planning for future improvement also includes a planned transition project for pupils in Year 10 and 11, and sixth-form students. As yet it is too early to fully assess improvements in all outcomes. However, clear targets have been set and the council's review of the impact of action to date demonstrates that the planned changes are likely to increase the numbers of students staying on, improve results as courses are tailored to their needs and drive forward changes in the curriculum provision. Delivery of these aims will need continued attention.

Service management

The JAR highlighted one action to be taken over the next six months:

- develop an overarching commissioning strategy for children's social care services.

The council has produced a suitable strategy and will develop specific purchasing plans by its deadline of September 2006.

The council has demonstrated good progress in the time available in meeting the JAR recommendations. It has good capacity to further improve its services for children and young people.

Yours sincerely



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