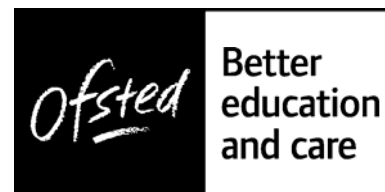


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Making Social Care
Better for People



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1 December 2005

Dear Colleagues

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

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 22 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 satisfactory. The council is clear about the need to encourage children and young people to adopt healthier lifestyles and directs its efforts through a comprehensive range of initiatives in schools. The council and partners are building on the Healthy Schools programme as an overall framework for addressing targets for improving and maintaining healthy lifestyles and here is a clear strategy for all schools to participate in the healthier schools programme. Participation in sport in recently inspected nursery and secondary schools is at least good. Schools comply with sex and relationship education requirements and Special schools are appropriately involved in drug education and sex and relationship programmes. The council has not however established robust measures for determining the impact of different projects and initiatives on outcomes. A steering group with representation from the council and key partners is working to bring together resources and strands of work to address the Public Health White Paper priorities. A joint commissioning group will be established.

The council recognises the need to reduce teenage pregnancy rates, which continue to be high in comparison with national averages. A range of projects and support initiatives have been set up to address this.

Actions taken to promote children and young people's mental health are satisfactory. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) strategy uses a structured service, containing specialist functions and targeting specific groups. A review of CAMHS commissioned by the stakeholder group identified that access to the service for disabled children and those from black and minority ethnic backgrounds (BME) needs to be improved. To improve access to and management of CAMHS the strategy is currently being revised and the service re-commissioned alongside community health services to be brought under one acute Trust. Looked after children have good access to CAMHS through a specialist service called "Thinking Allowed".

Although the health needs of children looked after by the council are generally met in a satisfactory way there has been a slight decline over the last three years in the proportion of children receiving regular health and dental checks, which is now well below the national and comparator average. The council acknowledges the need for continuing improvement by increasing those trained to carry out health checks and offering alternative venues for this assessment for those reluctant to use GP surgeries.

The council has identified that Asian and black children are underrepresented in their use of respite care so a cultural development worker has been appointed to as part of the palliative care service for Bristol children.

Staying safe

Outcomes in this area are good overall.

Good systems are in place to minimise the incidence of child abuse. The data relating to the child protection register (CPR) shows very good stability of placements and appropriate levels of registrations and re-registrations. However, there has been a drop of one band for the indicator (from good to acceptable performance) showing the percentage of de-registrations of children on the CPR register for more than two years. The council advises that these are small numbers and they currently run a 15 month review programme but this drop has left Bristol third from last in their comparator group.

Collaboration between agencies to safeguard children is well achieved through re-organised ACPC procedures and "working together" requirements are met. This year the Quality and Standards subgroup has increased its audit activity, resulting in changes in procedures, multi agency working and training. The percentage of initial assessment started within seven days and core assessments completed within 35 days both show good improvement. The numbers of core assessments of children in need that are carried out has risen considerably from 19.5 last year to 47 for 2004-2005. This is the highest rate Bristol has achieved. However, it is from a very low base and Bristol remains below average in their comparator group. The current target shows no plan to improve on this figure in the next financial year. The council intends to

reprioritise training on the assessment framework with the introduction of the Integrated Children's System later this year, which the council anticipates will improve assessment rates. Social worker allocation and percentage of reviews conducted for children on the child protection register remain at 100%.

Data from inspections of childcare services show a higher than average number of actions being taken, which relate to the suitability of adults providing care. The recent inspection of one secondary school identified a failure to secure satisfactory arrangements for the care, welfare and safety of pupils including bullying, racism and other forms of harassment. All schools are not focusing sufficiently on combating bullying, racism and other forms of harassment.

There is a year on year rise in the number of looked after children. To reduce this by eight per cent is a priority for the council and this will run alongside the implementation and development of the preventative strategy and the commissioning strategy. The number of children in family placements is generally good, although there is a reduced performance in three main areas; the number of children looked after for more than four years who have been in a foster placement for over two years; the percentage of looked after children fostered by relatives and friends; and the percentage of looked after children placed for adoption. The need to recruit a second kinship/private fostering post was identified in the action plan resulting from the Child Protection inspection (2003) and the development of kinship care was a priority area for improvement last year, which have not been achieved. The development of the commissioning strategy to increase the range of affordable, appropriate and high quality placements, whilst reducing costs, is a priority to address the financial pressures. Commissioning of block contracts with two Independent Fostering Associations (IFA's) has already been undertaken and five IFA emergency placements have also been commissioned.

The use of complaints systems is well developed. Inspection reports of care homes show systems are in place to ensure children are protected from abuse. Advocacy services for children in need of protection have had limited progress and are a priority area of work.

A race impact assessment of child protection services was undertaken in August 2004 and the implications for practice carefully considered. The council concluded that there was no evidence to suggest the over representation of children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds on the child protection register was an indicator of discriminatory practice.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes in this area are unsatisfactory. Children have access to good quality early years provision and settings are well supported by the council. Standards of literacy and numeracy at the end of Key Stage 1 are poor. The proportion of pupils achieving Level 2 in reading, writing, mathematics and science is poor and declining, although standards have improved in those schools where the local authority has targeted intensive support. Attainment at Key Stage 2 is improving and the progress pupils make between Key Stages 1 and 2 is in line with national rates. However, the gap between the authority and similar authorities is not closing quickly enough. The council recognises that the support provided for schools in improving literacy and numeracy has not been effective. Support services have been restructured, data for identifying pupil performance improved and procedures for targeting support strengthened.

Standards achieved by pupils at Key Stage 3, although below average, are slightly better than those achieved at Key Stages 1 and 2. The proportion of children achieving Level 5 in English and mathematics is improving in line with national averages but the gap is not narrowing. The progress pupils make in relation to their prior attainment between Key Stages 2 and 3 is below average. At Key Stage 4 levels of achievement are low. The proportions of young people gaining five or more GCSE grade A*-C or one grade A*-G are both low in comparison with similar authorities. The progress pupils make between Key Stage 2 and GCSE or Key Stage 3 and GCSE is below average. There has however been some improvement in outcomes for gifted and talented pupils.

The authority places high priority on promoting inclusion and equality of opportunity but strategies are not yet having sufficient impact. The achievements of many black and minority ethnic groups are significantly below those of their white peers and for some groups the gap is widening. A higher than average proportion of pupils have Statements of Special Educational Needs. The achievement of children with special educational needs is satisfactory and the council has established a range of initiatives for monitoring their progress and improving their outcomes. There has been some recent improvement in the achievements of children who are looked after by the council and targeted support is beginning to make a difference. However, results at both one and five GCSE or equivalent qualifications remain below those of comparators. Overall, the achievements of these children and young people continue to be below their peers at all key stages.

Attendance rates are low and the attendance rates for looked after children are poor. There has only been limited improvement in the level of unauthorised absences in primary schools over a three year period and little improvement in secondary schools. The authority recognises attendance to be a priority and is implementing a range of strategies to bring about improvement in both attendance and pupils' attitude. These

strategies are beginning to bring about improvement in some areas but are having insufficient impact in priority schools where the need for improvement is greatest. Attendance of pupils receiving intensive support has improved. Rates of exclusion are high but a range of actions are having an impact and rates are reducing. Actions to reduce exclusions are having least impact at Key Stage 3. The proportion of pupils reintegrated into mainstream schools is lower than for similar authorities and the council has a wide range of alternative types of provision to combat dissatisfaction. The authority has a high proportion of schools causing concern but the rate at which schools have been placed in formal categories following inspection is declining. Support provided for these schools is variable but mostly effective. The council has recognised the need to provide better support for school improvement and has rationalised support services and established a school improvement service. New protocols for intervention and support have been developed where schools cause concern. Head teachers have played a key role in strengthening procedures for school self-evaluation and data for monitoring school performance has improved. Governors are now more involved in school self-evaluation. A good range of voluntary and recreational activities is available for children and young people.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. Services provided by the youth offending team have been re-appraised and action taken to address weaknesses. A network of collaborative projects has been developed to reduce offending rates and help achieve youth justice board targets. The proportion of young people arrested for offending is declining although the council recognises the need for further improvement. The council reports they are on course to achieve their Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) target for reducing the rate of offending by looked after children and this is supported by the council's own local data. However, the national performance indicator for rates of offending of looked after children is in band two, unsatisfactory performance.

The majority of young people receive appropriate guidance and support to help them manage their lives. Most looked after children contribute to their reviews and have access to a complaints and advocacy service should they feel dissatisfied. Children and young people, including those in care, are encouraged to participate in decision making through a comprehensive range of forums and other opportunities for consultation. Appropriate use is made of a range of approaches and settings which relate well to the broad and differing needs of children who use council services. Children and young people exert their collective influence on the development of services and there are examples of good practice. Guidance for transition planning for example has been revised on the basis of advice provided by disabled children. A detailed review of transition planning has been completed and a new council-wide strategy established to ensure consistency of approach for all groups of young people and a focus on

individual needs. A wide range of support is available for children who have special educational needs and the council has created good opportunities for participation.

A range of projects and activities have been developed to improve citizenship and awareness of different cultures in schools. Recent inspections indicate however that standards relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in some secondary schools are not satisfactory.

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. The proportion of young people progressing to education, employment and training at age 16 is higher than for comparable cities. The proportion of young people not in education and training is higher than the national average but declining and the proportion of young people whose destinations are unknown is low.

The council works well with the local Local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Connexions partnership. Together they have established clear strategies for improving education and training opportunities for 14-19 year olds and for raising achievement levels. Collaboration between providers of education and training is improving, as is equality of access to provision that meets learners' needs. The council and its partners have not however placed sufficient emphasis on demonstrating that actions are resulting in improved outcomes for young people. Standards achieved by young people are variable; only two schools achieved average point scores above national averages in 2003-2004 and the overall performance of pupils in school sixth forms is below average. Guidance and support provided by the Connexions partnership for young people is good. The proportion of young offenders in full-time education, training or employment, although improving, remains low but agencies are co-operating well to improve education and training opportunities for this group.

Clear procedures have been established to support the transition of looked after young people and those with special educational needs to adult life. Most of these young people have appropriate transition plans. The proportion of care leavers in education and training is good and improving. Few carers of disabled children or disabled young people receive direct payments.

SUMMARY

Strengths	Areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a comprehensive range of health initiatives in schools, with inspections showing good levels of participation in sport • recognition of the need to improve teenage pregnancy indicators and a range of projects and initiatives to address needs • the CAMHS strategy; specialist functions and targets specific groups • the health service for looked after children is integrated into specialist CAMHS service and located within social services. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of more robust measurement of outcomes to evidence impact of projects and initiatives • increase the numbers of LAC having their annual health and dental check • reduce teenage pregnancy rates • improve access for Children with Disabilities to CAMHS service.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good stability of placements and appropriate levels of registrations and re-registrations • the number of children enabled to live in family placements is generally good and there is a range of placements available • the use of complaints systems is well developed • assessment data shows improvements in start and completion times. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the numbers of core assessments of children in need that are carried out • the percentage of de-registrations of children on the CPR register for more than 2 years • the percentage of LAC fostered by relatives or friends • the development of the Commissioning Strategy.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analysis of performance and clarity about the tasks that need to be achieved • rationalisation of strategies to improve children and young people's achievements • good early years provision. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standards of attainment and achievement at all key stages • achievements of looked after children • achievement of some black and minority ethnic groups • attendance • rates of exclusion and rates of reintegration of excluded pupils.

<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comprehensive range of forums and opportunities for consulting children and young people • projects and initiatives to improve citizenship and children’s awareness of different cultures • re-appraisal of YOT services and action to address weaknesses • support for children who have special educational needs. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rates of first time offending and re-offending • rate of offending by children looked after by the council • action taken by some schools to improve spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to combat bullying, racism and other forms of harassment.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective collaborative working • initiatives to broaden the 14-19 curriculum • improvements in the participation of looked after children in education, training and employment and targets for improvement. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overall performance of school sixth forms • proportion of young offenders in education, training or employment • overall proportion of young people not in education, training or employment • development of measures to demonstrate impact of strategies and improvements to outcomes.

Service management

Although there are clearly areas of the council’s performance where big step changes are needed to improve outcomes for children, the council has a good understanding of the tasks that need to be achieved.

The council’s analysis of educational achievements has been rigorous. The use of education data to support strategy development and implementation has improved and the council recognises that additional resources have not yet had sufficient impact on outcomes. Appropriate action has been taken to make education strategies more coherent, reduce the number of overall priorities and rationalise improvement services. Relationships with schools have improved and head teachers and governors are involved in developing improvement strategies and accept collective responsibility for their implementation and for assessing their impact. The council has established clear systems for monitoring performance against a range of delivery plans that identify necessary action. The use of performance data to monitor progress is improving across all services.

There has been a major overspend in social services this year but there is now a good understanding of the reasons for this and a clear way forward. This is centred on the implementation of two action plans, one focusing on systems and the other on strategic changes. The council does not underestimate the importance and complexity

of implementing these plans. In order to work towards the needed reductions in spending, the development and implementation of a commissioning strategy for children's placements is a priority.

This year, there have been changes in both the leadership of the council and the management of the social services department. In order to achieve the priorities and implement the new plans, the council recognises the importance of stability and permanency in management, alongside middle to long term decision making. The council is addressing this through implementing decisions on the new direction of both adult and children's services, in addition to agreeing strategic and commissioning objectives for each social services area.

The council and its key partners have agreed a way forward to establish a children's trust and interim arrangements are in place. There has been consistent cross party support for the Change of Children agenda so the recent change of administration does not bring any threat to a change of direction.

There is evidence of good partnership arrangements and collaborative working, including shared budgetary arrangements, however there is currently insufficient attention to demonstrating impact.

The council's recruitment and retention strategy has resulted in some success this year with a reduced turnover rate.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review

Being healthy

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

- remit and working of strategic health group.

Action is taken to promote children and young people's mental health:

- outcomes of CAMHS initiatives.

Staying safe

Looked after children live in safe environments and are protected from abuse and exploitation:

- reduction of numbers of looked after children, preventative strategies and implementation of these
- assessment systems and low numbers of core assessments
- developing a range of cost effective placements.

Enjoying and achieving

Children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and to achieve highly:

- impact of actions to improve overall achievements at all key stages and achievements of specific groups of children and young people.

Making a positive contribution

Action is taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people:

- offending and re-offending rates.

Achieving economic well-being

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

- impact of actions to raise achievements on 14-19 year olds overall and on specific groups.

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
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Commission for Social Care Inspection

APA final judgements 2005: Bristol City 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.	2
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