

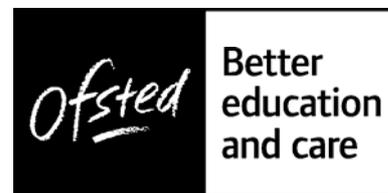
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Making Social Care
Better for People



Dr Sonia Sharp
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1 December 2005

Dear Dr Sharp

ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL'S EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE SERVICES 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 19 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. A partnership approach is used to promote the health and well-being of children and young people. Progress has been made establishing a range of services to support healthy living. The council and the Primary Care Trust (PCT) are working to establish a base line for measuring the impact of health initiatives. There is a range of multi-agency support for reductions in smoking levels and substance abuse. There is a clear focus on delivering improvements to the health of children and young people through the development of healthy schools award and programs to support exercise.

There is a good range of services for looked after children, with evidence of immunisation and regular health screening. Regulatory inspection reports point to active promotion of health and well-being with health plans implemented and regularly updated. There is evidence of safe medication systems in children's homes and the report on the fostering service stated that foster carers were well informed about health services. A range of professionals provide health support for looked after children and include a designated doctor, a looked after children's nurse and a vulnerable young people worker. Performance on the indicator on health for looked after children has fallen (average band), and is below comparators. This was related to a specific problem in year rather than a longer-term trend.

Although the incidence of teenage pregnancy for young people under 18 remains

above national averages, a multi-agency approach is beginning to impact and targeted work in specific areas has produced significant improvement.

There is a wide range of effective mental health services for young people with good performance on timely referrals. There has been year on year increased investment in the service for the last two years.

Staying safe

Outcomes in this area are generally good. Children and young people are provided with the safe environment to which they are entitled. Child protection procedures in schools are satisfactory and support, care and welfare is good or better in 26 out of 27 schools. There is an established system for supporting schools in addressing bullying and policies are in place in all schools. There is an effective partnership with National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and 'MIND' for addressing bullying. Regulatory inspection reports of the adoption and fostering services confirmed that systems were in place to safeguard young people.

A multi agency safeguarding board has been established and is appropriately engaging partners at a senior manager level across the borough. There are also a number of specific safeguarding posts including a safeguarding manager and a safeguarding officer for education. A range of multi-agency training has been provided and has had a good uptake.

Child protection indicators are generally good and those causing concern last year have significantly improved. There has been a reduction in the numbers on the child protection register (with numbers now lower than comparators), a significant reduction in registration rates and a high rate of deregistration. This has been achieved without a high rate of re-referrals or re-registrations. All child protection cases are allocated to a social worker. Although the indicator for child protection reviews shows below average performance, the problems were all at the start of the year and cases have been reviewed within timescale since September 2004 and this improvement continues. Performance on timely completion of core assessments has improved since last year, but remains an area where further improvements are needed.

Rotherham has a children in need protocol and adopts a preventative approach at the initial referral stage when possible. This has led to an increase in support packages. Work has been done in year on clarifying threshold criteria with partner agencies and further work is planned. There has been a significant reduction in referrals of children in need since last year.

Performance on adoption and fostering is good.

There is a range of appropriate systems in place to promote the safety of looked after children, including an advocacy service, a children's rights officer and children's rights

groups. Regulatory inspection reports confirmed that all children's homes have child protection policies which staff understood. Anti-bullying policies are in place and were reported as having been used effectively. Complaints procedures were actively promoted. Checks to ensure the suitability of staff are completed. There has been a reduction in the allocation of social workers to looked after children but performance remains in line with comparators.

Enjoying and achieving

The support for enjoying and achieving is satisfactory overall with a number of good features. However, these are balanced by some significant weaknesses.

Support for attendance and behaviour is effective. Rates of attendance are improving, pupil attitudes are good, exclusion rates are low and there is a high rate of reintegration of excluded pupils.

There is effective support for early years education. The attainment of pupils on entry to schools is below the national average. Attainment at Key Stage 1 deteriorated in 2004. The council is targeting support and resources to address this issue. Unvalidated data for 2005 suggests the decline has been reversed.

At Key Stage 2 attainment in English and mathematics is below the national average and that of statistical neighbours; however, science is in line with national rates. The rate of improvement is inconsistent. Unvalidated data for 2005 suggests improvement has been achieved in all three subjects. The impact of the targeted support in primary schools is good with greater rates of improvement in these schools than found locally and nationally. Significant progress has been made in reducing the number of schools where attainment is below floor targets.

At Key Stage 3 attainment in English is improving but the gap to national averages and that of statistical neighbours is growing. In mathematics and science performance is better and attainment is in line with national figures. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is improving in the five A* to C at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) indicator, which is now in line with that of statistical neighbours. Performance at the one or more GCSE A* to G level remains good and in line with the national average.

Support for schools causing concern is satisfactory overall and the authority has not been afraid to take decisive action. The number of schools in an Ofsted category has been reduced significantly since 2001. However, recently one secondary school and two special schools have been placed in special measures and this is a cause of concern. There are too few very good primary schools.

The Youth Service is effective in supporting young people and there is a particular focus on the most vulnerable children and young people. There is a very good music

service and the authority provides master classes at weekends for gifted and talented pupils.

In the main looked after children are succeeding in education and are encouraged to participate in leisure activities. The attainment of looked after children has improved but there are increasing levels of absence which the authority has challenged effectively. There is good support for learning through the 'Get Real' team, a partnership between social services and education, that actively works with looked after children to promote educational achievement.

The SEN strategy has appropriate priorities and support is valued by schools. There is a thorough analysis of the progress made by pupils with special educational needs.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes in this area are good. There is an effective youth offending service, which is starting to impact on offending rates and anti-social behaviour, although recidivism rates remain high.

There is evidence of a number of initiatives to support young people in managing transition and challenges in their lives. These include support for early years, transition to secondary education and post-16 education, training and employment. Pathway plans are generally in place for eligible young people (94.24%) but with room for further development to ensure all have appropriate plans in place. One particular area requiring attention is the low level of planning for young people with a disability, (50%). The council has plans to employ specific workers to address the problem. There are a range of services to support young people to live independently which include supported living flatlets and National Children's Home (NCH) staff providing support for care leavers.

There is an innovative contract with the Young Men's Christian Association to support a small group of young carers. The council has a range of initiatives to involve young people in decision-making and the development of services, which include the Youth Parliament and Youth Cabinet, young people acting as peer evaluators and 'Voice and Influence' workers.

Looked after children are involved in reviewing provision and planning their own development and there is planning for the level of involvement to be increased. There is room for improvement in the percentage of looked after children communicating their views to a review but a range of innovative developments are in place to further encourage this such as an interactive review consultation form and the development of texting of views.

A clear strategy for the systematic involvement of children and young people is in draft form and provides an effective framework for developments.

Achieving economic well-being

The support for children and young people in achieving economic well-being is good. There are well established partnerships and innovative projects in place to develop the provision for 14 to 19 education to meet the needs of young people and the local economy. There is an emphasis on collaboration and three excellence partnerships have developed innovative collaborative work between schools, colleges, work-based learning providers and other key partners. Effective use has been made of the increased flexibility programme to support learners in remaining engaged with education.

A wide range of networks are in place to support effective work related learning and encourage enterprise. A project in the Dearne Valley as an enterprise pathfinder for developing enterprise within the curriculum has been effective and is currently being disseminated to all 14 to 19 providers.

The attainment of students in applied GCSE courses is above that found nationally and significant numbers of students access general national vocational qualifications (GNVQ) courses with a 71% pass rate in 2004. These developments target the most vulnerable groups and are succeeding in reducing the proportion of young people classified as not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET). The NEET figure of 8.7% is below the national rate of 7.7%. However, this reflects a better performance than the average figures of 10.4% for the region.

There are systems to support transition for looked after children and for young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities based on collaborative work between the council's 14 to 19 team, Connexions, inclusion services, schools, colleges and work-based learning providers. All special schools have links to work-based learning providers and colleges, and access to an increasing range of opportunities. The attainment of these young people is monitored closely.

The percentage of care leavers in education, training and employment at 19 is very good at 62.2%. Looked after young people are referred to the NCH Bridges Leaving Care Team, and allocated a personal adviser. Personal and welfare support is available and financial support packages are in place for all care leavers in accordance with the council and NCH Leaving Care policies and procedures. The council also supports a number of work experience placements and modern apprenticeships for looked after children.

SUMMARY:

Strengths	Areas for Improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong partnership approach with the PCT and schools towards health and well-being • referral of acute and non-acute mental health issues to CAMHS within time scales is 100% • education on smoking, substance abuse and sexual health and relationships education reach all children • positive systems for addressing the health of looked after children • a good range of services is in place to support young peoples' mental health. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teenage pregnancy rates are above national average • monitoring of health of looked after children has declined from good to average • develop a range of indicators to evaluate the impact of the range of initiatives and determine best value.
<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • senior multi-agency work led by safeguarding board • generally good performance on child protection indicators with improved performance on ones previously causing concern • the strategy for preventative support; the children in need protocol has increased support packages and safe systems for recruitment • good performance on adoption and fostering • the range of measures in children's homes to promote children's rights and safety • support for care and welfare in schools is generally good • all schools fulfil procedures for child protection. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved procedures for core assessments • further work on agreeing threshold criteria for children in need.

<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evidence of improving attainment in secondary schools. SEN strategy and support systems support for raising the attainment of looked after children support for improving attendance and behaviour. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> rates of primary attainment and the lack of consistent progress attainment in English at Key Stage 3 schools in an Ofsted category of concern attendance of looked after children.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> commissioning of services to support young carers services to support young people to live independently an effective Youth Offending service which is impacting on offending rates and targeting provision effectively a range of strategies to consult with young people – Rights 2 Rights, Voice and Influence, Orchard Flyers, Youth Parliament and cabinet, schools councils. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> percentage of LAC contributing to reviews transition and pathway planning for children with a disability.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a coordinated 14 to 19 strategy a commitment to the development of enterprise rising trends of post-16 attainment good rates of participation in education, training and employment strategies to plan for and support the involvement of looked after children in education, training and employment. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> declining trend of entry to further education levels of direct payment to young people or their carers.

Service management

Rotherham has established clear systems for planning that links the corporate plan and the community strategy to the five outcomes. There is an active change management team implementing an appropriate development plan for the integrated children's service. The identified priorities are being based on an analysis of need but the authority has rightly prioritised further detailed needs analysis and a visioning exercise as key priorities.

There has been widespread consultation with stakeholders including schools, children and young people and the voluntary sector. There are appropriate structures for consultation with children and young people and additional appointments have been made to extend their involvement. Standards for consultation and rights are being established.

The Children and Young People's Board was established in March 2003, to oversee planning and monitor progress. The council appointed a Director of Children's Services in April 2005 and a cabinet member for Children and Young People in May 2005. An interim leadership group is in place including representatives from the primary care trust, Youth Offending Service and local authority heads of service. Work has commenced on a Children and Young People's plan. A Scrutiny Committee for Children and Young People's Services has been established and a programme of work agreed for the first year based upon the five Every Child Matters themes. A safeguarding board has been established and a manager appointed

The council has established a range of training and development programmes to help the workforce manage change. Workforce reform in schools is well underway and good progress is being made. However, staff turnover and sickness absence in social services are too high.

Structures for performance management and planning for improvement have been developed and strengthened. A newly formed Performance and Quality team within the Chief Executive's department is central to driving the council's improvement agenda.

Areas for exploration in the joint area review:

Being healthy

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

- the strategic approach to the development of healthy living for children and young people
- the impact of the strategies to reduce teenage pregnancy and other initiatives.

Staying safe

The incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised:

- quality of assessment processes for child protection.

Enjoying and achieving

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

- the impact of the strategies for raising attainment.

Making a positive contribution

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to make a positive contribution:

- transition and pathway planning for young people with a disability.

Final judgements

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

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

Divisional Manager
Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS

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

APA final judgements 2005: Rotherham Metropolitan Borough 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	3
The contribution of <i>local authority's education services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
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 capacity to improve its services for children and young people	3

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