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Mr Ashley Ayre
Strategic Director Children's Services
Bath and North East Somerset Council
PO Box 25
Riverside
Temple Street
Keynsham
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Dear Mr Ayre

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in Bath and North East Somerset Council 2008

This letter summarises the findings of the 2008 annual performance assessment (APA) for your council. The evaluations and judgements in the letter draw on a range of data and information which covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008. As you know, the APA is not based on an inspection of your services and, therefore, can only provide a snapshot based on the evidence considered. As such, I am grateful to you for assuring the quality of the data provided.

Performance is judged on a four point scale as detailed in the handbook. I should emphasise that the grades awarded are based on an overall 'best fit' model. For instance, an outstanding judgement of Grade 4 reflects that overall most aspects, but not necessarily all, of the services in the area are working very well. We know that one of the features of outstanding provision is the drive for greater improvement and no council would suggest, and nor would Ofsted, that a judgement of outstanding indicates that everything is perfect. Similarly within a judgement of inadequate overall, Grade 1, there could be some aspects of the overall service that are adequate or even good. Judgements are made in a rounded way, balancing all of the evidence and giving due consideration to outcomes, local and national contexts, priorities and decision-making.



The following table sets out the grades awarded for performance in 2008.

Assessment judgement area	APA grade
Overall effectiveness of children's services	3
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	3
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	3

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale
4: outstanding/excellent; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate*

Overall effectiveness of children’s services

Grade 3

Bath and North East Somerset Council consistently delivers good services for children and young people. Most key areas for development are well known and prioritisation is based on detailed analysis. The council’s capacity to improve, including its management of services, is good. The council has further strengthened effective partnerships that have had significant impact on the outcomes for children and young people. The council has made good progress in responding to most of the recommendations made in the 2007 APA, particularly in engaging more young people in contributing to service planning and improvement. The council has made steady progress in maintaining high standards in schools and has enabled more young people to continue their education post-16. However, although standards are above average, there has been a slight dip in girls’ attainment in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. In addition, the pace of development for narrowing the gap between the achievement of Black and dual heritage children and young people and their peers is too slow. The number of children and young people involved in the Healthy Schools Programme is good. The child and adolescent mental health service is accessible to all and effective action has been taken to support families who suffer from domestic violence. While multi-agency work to safeguard children appears good, the numbers of core assessments of children in need is too low, and too few are completed within the required timescales.

Being healthy

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council’s analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nearly all schools participate in the Healthy Schools Programme and nearly two-thirds have gained the Healthy School Status. ▪ There is good access to the child and adolescent mental health service for children and young people, including looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. ▪ Local services share a good working partnership and have clear, well targeted priorities and effective multi-agency work which secures the health of children and young people.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintaining the steady reduction of teenage pregnancies and remaining on track to meet government targets. ▪ Delays in provision of wheelchairs to children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Staying safe

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fostering services are outstanding. ▪ There are well-established and effective Local Safeguarding Children Board. ▪ The support for families and children experiencing domestic violence is of good quality and is well-targeted. ▪ Systems for tracking children and young people missing from care and/or school are robust.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The numbers of core assessments undertaken is well below average and there is poor timeliness in their completion. ▪ The proportion of children and young people who are made subject to a child protection plan having previously been subject to such a plan is significantly higher than average. This is inconsistent with previous performance. ▪ Although the timeliness of the completion of looked after children reviews has improved, this still remains slower than expected.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development in this outcome area underestimate a number of important weaknesses.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standards and attendance are above national averages and children and young people make good progress at school. ▪ There have been significant improvement in attainment of boys, particularly in writing in Key Stages 1 and 2, and more generally in Key Stage 3. ▪ Children and young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good educational outcomes. ▪ Provision for early years education is good.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Although overall standards remain above average in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, there has been a slight dip in the performance of girls. ▪ The attainment of some Black and dual heritage pupils remains behind that of other groups of children.

Making a positive contribution

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is a strong culture of participation by, and consultation with, children and young people who are looked after and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. ▪ The youth work practice is of good quality. ▪ Effective work by the youth offending service has led to a substantial reduction in re-offending.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transition planning for young people with learning difficulties and /or disabilities has been strengthened, although there was a slight reduction this year in the number of plans in place. ▪ The proportion of final warnings or convictions given to the small number of looked after children is higher than similar councils.

Achieving economic well-being

Grade 3

The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in this aspect is good. The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development for this outcome area is consistent with the evidence.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The proportion of young people completing Year 11 who continue in education has improved. The proportion of young people achieving Level 2 and Level 3 by age 19 is above average. ▪ The range of post-16 education and training opportunities available for young people in mainstream schools, special schools and colleges has improved and is good. ▪ Strong and effective partnerships and collaborative working across agencies.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The range and quality of accommodation has been strengthened for care leavers but the council recognises the need to develop more appropriate accommodation to avoid emergency use of Bed and Breakfasts. ▪ When compared to similar councils there is an increasing proportion of 19-year-olds who are not in education or employment. The proportion of 19-year-olds whose destination is unknown is higher than average.

Capacity to improve, including the management of children’s services

Grade 3

The council’s capacity to improve its services for children and young people is good and management of services is also good. The council has clear ambitions for children and young people, based on a good understanding of local need. For example, it has extended its outreach services to provide support for young people with drug and alcohol problems in outlying areas. Leadership is effective. Senior managers are well-informed through effective consultation with partner agencies and children and young people. The council has a good track record of improvement and the children and young people’s plan is suitably ambitious. There are good plans in place which are based upon identified and prioritised needs. A notable improvement since last year is the quality of provision of post-16 education and the collaboration between educational and vocational settings. However, some important areas of work, such as the completion of core assessments for children in need and the provision of transition plans for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have not improved sufficiently.

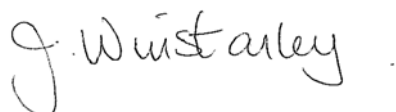
The council has graded its capacity to improve as outstanding. This self-evaluation is not as rigorous and as accurate as it could be. The pace and consistency of improvement and effective action to remedy weaknesses have slowed in some key areas which are set out in the table below.

<p>Major strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is strong corporate leadership with clear strategic initiatives and effective partnership working. ▪ Service functions are well managed and are good across all five outcome areas. ▪ The response by most children and young people to provision and services is good.
<p>Important weaknesses and areas for development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There has been a dip in the attainment of girls at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and the underachievement of some Black and dual heritage children and young people. ▪ Attention to equality and diversity is not fully demonstrated in meeting the needs of the minority ethnic communities and in wheelchair provision. ▪ Better use and improved timeliness of core assessments.

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.

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.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager
Local Services Inspection