



**Children and Families
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
5th March 2009**

**Report from the Director of
Children and Families**

For Information

Wards Affected:
ALL

**2008 Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of Services
for Children and Young People in the London Borough of
Brent**

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises the judgements of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) for Brent's 2008 Annual Performance Assessment of services delivered during the period April 2007 to March 2008.
- 1.2 The APA is designed to assess the Council's specific contribution to:
- The Council's children's Services overall and the specific contributions they make to improving outcomes for children and young people.
 - The contribution that these services make towards improving each of the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcome areas (being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and economic well being)
 - The Council's capacity to further improve these services.
- 1.3 Ofsted inspectors found that the London Borough of Brent delivers good services that deliver above minimum requirements. Clear, determined leadership and close partnership working has enabled the council to sustain good performance in most outcome areas. Inspectors were unable to agree fully with the self assessment of children's services with regard to staying safe and concluded that performance in the provision for social care has fallen in some important aspects. As a result the judgement for this outcome has fallen from 3 or good to 2 or adequate.

- 1.4 We believe this judgement is harsh and that our original self-evaluation was accurate. The Inspectors' original draft judgement was based on a decline in five performance indicators which was factually incorrect as two of the indicators had improved.
The performance levels of the indicators were also within the range of a level 3, or good performance.
We appealed against the grade 2 judgement and although the Ofsted appeal panel acknowledged the factual errors and changed the judgement wording they did not change the judgement level. An action plan to address the issues raised in the APA letter, is attached as an Appendix to this report.
- 1.5 Inspectors concluded that the Council's capacity to improve, including the management of children's services is good with notable progress in commissioning arrangements resulting in a reduction in use of residential placements and progress towards recommendations contained within 2007 APA.
- 1.6 The Children's Services grade is the performance rating for the purpose of section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. To fully contribute to future Comprehensive Area Assessments Ofsted is proposing to develop a performance profile to arrive at a rating that will contribute to the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) from November 2009. Ofsted is currently consulting on its proposals for contributing to the CAA with final details to be published in January 2009.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are requested to note the outcome of the 2008 Annual Performance Assessment of services for children and young people in Brent and its contribution to the Audit Commission's CAA.
- 2.2 Members are asked to note and endorse the action plan produced to address the areas of development identified as part of the APA process.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 APA is an integral element of the improvement cycle for performance management of local authorities children's services and their strategic partners. Ofsted is required by section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to undertake an annual review of each council's children's services and to award a performance rating for them. The annual performance assessment discharges these duties.
- 3.2 The rating awarded is also used as the rating for the children and young people's block in the Audit Commission's comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) of local authority services and thereafter will inform the Comprehensive Area Assessment from November 2009.
- 3.3 In contrast to the 2007 APA guidance, based on a review and refresh of the local Children and Young People's Plan (2006-09), the 2008 APA required a self assessment of progress against the five ECM outcomes using a reduced set of key performance indicators to evidence performance and progress. The

grading system remained the same with judgements based on a scale of 1 to 4 with 4 reflecting outstanding/excellent, 3 good, 2 adequate and 1 as inadequate services to children and young people.

3.4 Our self assessment built upon the award of a good (3) judgement in 2007 across all the domains and acknowledged improvements in some areas were less than hoped for but against the background of increased demand for services. On this basis our self assessment recommended maintaining the 2007 performance rating of good (3) across all the domains. The table below summarises the Ofsted's judgements regarding major strengths and weaknesses together with areas for development in each of the 5 outcome areas.

ECM Outcome	Major Strengths	Important Weaknesses and areas for development
Be Healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good reduction in teenage pregnancy rates which are falling faster than similar councils. • Comprehensive and accessible child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), including good access to specialist services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health assessments and dental checks for looked after children have fallen below similar councils.
Stay Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good adoption rates and high numbers of children and young people in kinship placements. • Effective and well-targeted preventative and intervention services contributing to a reduction in the number of children looked after. • Young people are well supported in school and report feeling safe from bullying. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proportion of looked after children having had three or more placement moves in one year has risen above similar councils and national averages. • The number of core assessments completed within timescale has risen slightly but remains below similar councils and the national average. • In the following key areas of social care provision the council's performance has <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fallen and is below that of similar councils and the national average: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviews of children subject to a child protection plan • the number of looked after children adopted within 12 months of the

ECM Outcome	Major Strengths	Important Weaknesses and areas for development
		decision of best interest.
Enjoy & Achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and young people make good progress and attainment is above average by age 16; standards continue to rise. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well in comparison with their peers nationally. The school improvement service gives good support and challenge for schools causing concern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards at the end of the Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1 remain below similar councils and national figures. Despite a rising trend in results, the attainment of Black Caribbean, Black African and looked after children remains below that of other groups of children and young people in Brent.
Make a Positive Contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is good intervention with those at risk of offending. There is a reduction in the numbers of first-time offenders. The council takes effective measures to engage young people who offend in education, employment or training. Opportunities for children and young people to give their views on services are effective and include harder-to-reach young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-offending rates are above similar councils.
Achieve Economic Well Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proportion of young people gaining Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications at age 19 is consistently above similar councils and the national figures. Participation levels of those over 16 who are in education, employment or training are higher than local and national figures, including for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those leaving care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The breadth of work-based learning opportunities remains too narrow and the availability of apprenticeships is limited.

3.5 For the 2008 APA Ofsted highlighted the “major strengths” and “important weakness and areas for development”. In 2007 these were described as “strengths” and areas for “development”. There is a difference between an important weakness and an area of development. Some of the points listed under the important weakness areas are not important weaknesses. For example, under Enjoy and Achieve the attainment gap for Black Caribbean Children is an area for development. The continuing narrowing of the the gap and the strategies used by the Council and Schools to achieve this are a

strength, rather than a weakness. We have written to Ofsted pointing out the flaw in this categorisation.

3.6 The self assessment was followed up by a site visit with inspectors which took place on 9th October 2008. Key lines of enquiry for the site visit did not indicate any specific concerns regarding the staying safe outcome.

3.7 The draft judgement letter was sent to councils on 14th November 2008 for comment. Despite representation regarding the Staying Safe judgement made on 3rd December and supported by evidence, the judgement grade of adequate (2) was maintained. The final APA letter (attached as appendix 1) was published on the Ofsted website on 17th December 2008. The areas requiring further developed identified in the judgement letter have been incorporated into an action plan (attached as appendix 2).

3.8 The inspectors note in the APA letter that:

- The Council has good capacity to improve its services for children and young people.
- In general, management and senior leadership of these services is strong and effective with evidence close partnership working to sustain good performance in most outcome areas.
- The Council has made good progress in responding to the recommendations made in the 2007 APA and Joint Area Review of 2006.
- Children and young people continue to do well in schools, making good progress towards academic standards that are consistently above national averages at the ages of 16 and 18.
- There have been improvements since the 2007 APA in raising the attainment of minority ethnic groups and looked after children though narrowing the attainment gap remains a priority for the borough.
- The Council continues to do well at increasing the numbers of young people in education, employment or training but that recidivism rates are not falling quickly enough.
- There has been good progress in reducing the rate of exclusions for secondary schools to bring the figures in line with the national average as well as good progress towards reducing teenage conception rates.

3.9 Judgements have been made according to grades on a scale of 1 to 4. Grade descriptors are defined by Ofsted as:

- Grade 4: A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users
- Grade 3: A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users
- Grade 2: A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users
- Grade 1: A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users

2008 APA Judgements For Brent	Grade Awarded
Overall effectiveness of children's services	3
Being healthy	3
Staying safe	2
Enjoying & achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	3
Achieving economic well being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of children's services	3

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no direct financial implications contained within this report. However, the department continues to implement its Invest to Save programmes for children in care or on the verge of care. These programmes have helped contribute to the improvements in the services for children and young people.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 None

6.0 Diversity Implications

6.1 The APA considers the diversity of the local community and prioritises the needs of vulnerable excluded and under represented groups such as children with disabilities looked after children and excluded young people. Monitoring arrangements enable the active promotion of the equalities agenda.

6.2 The Children and Families department has developed high level equalities Action Plan set against the six priorities identified in the children and young peoples plan. The APA letter has made a judgement on our progress on these priorities and made recommendations for further improvement.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

None

7.1 Background Papers (essential)

- i) Annual Performance Assessment submitted 26th June 2008
- ii) APA letter published 17th December 2008
- iii) Action plan to address areas requiring further development

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