

Report to: **Cabinet**

Date: **26 January 2009**

Title: **Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Purpose of report: **To advise Cabinet of the outcome of the Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services and to distribute the APA Letter which was published on 16 December 2008.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to note the 2008 Annual Performance Assessment Letter

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 There were no recommendations made as a result of the 2008 APA process therefore there will be no specific APA improvement plan for 2009. Our ability to maintain or improve on the overall judgement of "Good", however, with four areas that are "Outstanding" and two areas that are "Good" will need to be considered as part of the Reconciling Policy and Resources process.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 Each year the Council is subject to its Annual Performance Assessment (APA) by Ofsted, which judges our Children's Services under each of the "Every Child Matters" outcomes. There are gradings for overall performance, management and capacity to improve and for the five outcomes for children. The gradings operate on a 1-4 scale as follows: 1 = inadequate, 2 = adequate, 3 = good, 4 = outstanding.

2.2 The Department submitted a performance self-assessment and the new Children & Young People's Plan to Ofsted in May 2008. The inspectors decided that an on-site visit by inspectors was not needed as East Sussex was a low risk authority. We were the only county in the South East who did not have a visit by inspectors. Ofsted, therefore, considered the self-assessment alongside other performance information, including the 2008 Tellus 3 survey of Children & Young People in East Sussex, in order to reach a judgement.

2.3 The APA letter setting out the findings of the 2008 Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of Children's Services is attached in Appendix 1. This letter showed an improvement in the grade awarded for safeguarding since 2007 (to 4 – Outstanding). All other grades remained the same as 2007.

3. APA Letter 2008

3.1 The APA letter, was published on 16 December 2008. The grades are as follows;

- Overall effectiveness of children's services - Good (Grade 3)
- Being healthy – Outstanding (Grade 4)
- Staying safe - Outstanding (Grade 4)
- Enjoying and achieving – Good (Grade 3)
- Making a positive contribution – Outstanding (Grade 4)

- Achieving economic well-being - Good (Grade 3)
- Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people - Outstanding (Grade 4)

3.2 Further to these judgements, the APA letter acknowledges that East Sussex County Council makes a good contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people and delivers services which are consistently above minimum requirements. It also acknowledges that the council has made good progress in responding to the recommendations of the joint area review report, published in November 2007 and, therefore, makes no additional recommendations for improvement as a result of the 2008 APA.

3.3 Comparatively, these judgments about children's services place East Sussex as the best performing authority in the South East and the best performing among our Statistical Neighbours. We are also within the top 7% of authorities in the country, and are the top performing county council in England¹.

4. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations

4.1 The APA advises the authority, stakeholders and the public on how well the Council is delivering its Children's Services. Additionally, the findings from the APA will feed into the Council's overall Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) which will be published by the Audit Commission in February 2009. The Cabinet is therefore asked to note the report and the background to the final judgments.

Matt Dunkley,
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Louise Carter, Assistant Director, Planning and Performance, 01273 482809

Local Members:

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Appendix 1 – 2008 APA Letter

¹ The other authorities in the top 7% are Gateshead, York, Kensington & Chelsea, Camden, Corporation of London, Kingston Upon Thames, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Richmond Upon Thames.

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17 December 2008

Mr Matt Dunkley
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Dear Mr Dunkley

Annual performance assessment of services for children and young people in East Sussex County 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	4
Staying safe	4
Enjoying and achieving	3
Making a positive contribution	4
Achieving economic well-being	3
Capacity to improve, including the management of services for children and young people	4

*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

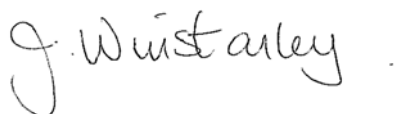
East Sussex County Council makes a good contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people and delivers services which are consistently above minimum requirements. The council has made good progress in responding to the recommendations of the joint area review report, published in November 2007. Planning and multi-agency collaboration has been strongly supported by extensive consultation. Progress has been outstanding in developing and strengthening opportunities for children and young people to make a positive contribution and to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyles. The council continues to prioritise the reduction of local teenage conception rates and has implemented a new strategy for 2008-09. The council has had a significant impact on the support given to children and young people in schools, through initiatives such as the 'Making Good Progress' pilot for assessment, and increased provision of breakfast clubs and after school activities. The progress of children and young people across a broad range of accredited pathways has improved, although the standards attained, especially in Key Stage 4, do not always match those in comparable councils and nationally. There have been notable increases in the attainment of a significant number of looked after children and young people. Good progress has been made in developing opportunities for young people to prepare for future economic well-being. The council's capacity to improve is outstanding, built on appropriate ambitions for children and young people, strong and well informed leadership, rigorous systems for scrutiny and financial management and effective cooperation between partner agencies both at a strategic and operational level. The council continues to take appropriate action to ensure that provision and outcomes are consistent across all geographical areas of the county.

The council's analysis of its strengths and areas for development is consistent with the evidence. There are no additional recommendations to make as a result of the APA.

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 as part of this process and for the time given by you and your colleagues in preparing for the assessment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Juliet Winstanley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Juliet Winstanley
Divisional Manager, Local Services Inspection

Major strengths and important weaknesses

Major strengths	Important weaknesses and areas for development
<p>Being healthy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ With 100% participation in the Healthy Schools Programme, a high proportion have gained the new Healthy School status. ▪ Excellent progress in the development of a comprehensive child and adolescent mental health service. ▪ Sustained high performance in promoting the health of looked after children. 	<p>Being healthy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reducing the number of teenage conceptions.
<p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outstanding fostering service and short breaks for disabled children. ▪ Excellent performance in achieving placement stability for looked after children. 	<p>Staying safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The number of looked after children with an allocated social worker is significantly below that found in similar councils.
<p>Enjoying and achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timely and apt interventions because the council knows its schools well. ▪ The rate of progress in raising standards, with a stronger upward trend in some areas than that of comparable councils and nationally. ▪ Notable increases in the attainment of a significant number of looked after children and young people. 	<p>Enjoying and achieving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relatively low levels of attainment in Key Stage 4.
<p>Making a positive contribution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very high levels of engagement with children and young people – through formal consultation, focus groups and targeted outreach. ▪ Strong performance within the Youth Justice Board framework. ▪ Contribution to their reviews by 100% of looked after children and young people with disabilities. 	<p>Making a positive contribution</p>
<p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effective strategic planning based on a review of provision and assessment of 	<p>Achieving economic well-being</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The falling but still significant number of young people not in

<p>need, such as provision for those with autistic spectrum disorders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good integration of services and multi-agency working, including effective 14–19 partnerships. ▪ Effective arrangements for transition. 	<p>education, employment or training.</p>
<p>Capacity to improve including the management of children’s services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effective cooperation between partner agencies at a strategic and operational level. ▪ Strong leadership of children’s services responding to the excellent ambition of the council and its partners for children and young people. ▪ Comprehensive and accurate data shaping planning, regularly reviewed and updated. 	<p>Capacity to improve including the management of children’s services</p>