

ANNEX 2

Ofsted publishes 2008 Annual Performance Assessments

Ofsted today publishes the outcomes of the 2008 Annual Performance Assessments (APAs) conducted across 147 local authorities in England.

The APAs provide a broad overview of every council's performance in relation to children's services, including education, social care and health. Ofsted's evaluations and judgements are drawn from a council's self assessment, performance data, the views of the local Government Office, assessments by the Youth Justice Board and Healthcare Commission briefings, key data from local inspections and Joint Area Reviews, and the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

As well as overall grades for children's services and a council's capacity to improve, the APA also uses the above information to award grades against the five 'Every Child Matters' outcome areas – being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic well-being.

This year, of the 147 councils receiving an APA that are published today, 73% have been judged good or outstanding in the contribution they make to improving services overall for children and young people. This is a decrease on last year (78%) but confirms the good work of the vast majority of English councils in improving outcomes for children.

However, Ofsted has also judged four councils inadequate overall this year. None was inadequate overall in 2007, so this is a cause for concern. Eight have been assessed as inadequate for the 'staying safe' outcome area, compared to four last year.

Commenting on the APAs, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector Christine Gilbert said: "Many local authorities continue to work hard to improve the services that they provide for children and young people. We see significant achievements across children's services and those involved in doing difficult work in complex circumstances can be pleased about their achievements. I know they are not complacent and will strive to do better still for children and young people.

"However, I am concerned that some services provided for the most vulnerable children and young people remain inadequate. Where this has been found in the APA, we have clearly identified where improvements are needed.

"We would expect those working in children's services to address these issues as an urgent priority with support from their local Government Office. We will be inspecting next year to ensure they make good progress."

ANNEX 2

The following table provides a breakdown of the number of councils achieving each grade in the 2008 APA:

	Grade 1: Inadequate	Grade 2: Adequate	Grade 3: Good	Grade 4: Outstanding
Children's Services	4	35	99	9
Capacity to improve	4	32	78	33
Every Child Matters outcome areas				
Being healthy	2	31	96	18
Staying safe	8	39	83	17
Enjoying & achieving	5	37	92	13
Positive contribution	0	12	98	37
Economic wellbeing	3	27	100	17

There have been some real strengths emerging across children's services. For example:

- The proportion of young people nationally achieving five or more GCSE grades A* to C or the equivalent continues to rise
- The number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system is lower than in 2007
- There has been a dramatic rise in the number of children with complex needs benefiting from a core assessment (leading to plans designed to ensure that they receive all the services they need to live safely and successfully)
- More looked after children are now fostered or adopted in families rather than placed in a children's home
- A 10% increase in the number of young people completing apprenticeships since last year.

Across all the APAs this year, some of the areas for improvement identified include:

- Increasing the number of looked after children allocated a named social worker
- Improving the stability of long term placements
- Reducing the number of repeat referrals to children's services
- Working to reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy
- Improving the proportion of young offenders in education, employment and training.

Christine Gilbert concluded: "These APAs provide a snap-shot of how well local authority children's services - including education, social care and health – performed in 2007/08 and they are useful to identify trends and highlight issues that local authorities need to address. However, we recognise that data alone cannot provide a full enough picture of performance and local authorities should use the APA reports to improve practice on the ground.

ANNEX 2

“For those judged to be good or even outstanding, whilst this reflects that overall services are working well, it does not mean that things are perfect. One of the features of outstanding provision is the drive for greater improvement. I would call on all local authorities, whatever their grade, to use their APA reports to drive up standards.”

From next year, APAs will be replaced by a new inspection system – the Comprehensive Area Assessment – that will ensure a stronger focus on front-line practice, including annual unannounced inspection visits in every local authority to complement a three year more intensive programme of inspection. These will be used to bring forward full inspections where there are concerns about the welfare and safeguarding of children.

Notes for Editors

1. Ofsted has undertaken 150 Annual Performance Assessments of local authorities. The results of 147 of those assessments are being published today. Three local authorities are currently contesting their grades.
2. The 2008 assessment in each council was undertaken by two Ofsted inspectors with a background in education and social care.
3. Judgements relate 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 outcome areas (being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, and achieving economic well-being)
 - the council’s capacity to further improve these services.
4. The evaluations and judgements in the APAs draw on a range of data and information which covers the period 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008 and data from local inspections carried out between 1 April 2007-31 July 2008.
5. The grade awarded for the council’s contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people provides the grade for the children’s and young people’s service block of the comprehensive performance assessment (CPA) in 2008.
6. Annual performance assessments are an integral element of the improvement cycle for performance-managing councils and their strategic partners. Not only are they, of themselves, a vehicle to drive change, they also give a position statement for use by the DCSF and Government Office children’s services advisers in annual priorities meetings with councils and in support and challenge processes.

ANNEX 2

7. All judgements are made on the following four-point scale:

Grade	Descriptor
Grade 4: A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for children and young people, is innovative and cost-effective, and fully contributes to raising expectations and the achievement of wider outcomes for the community.
Grade 3: A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for children and young people, has some innovative practice, and is increasingly cost-effective whilst making contributions to wider outcomes for the community.
Grade 2: A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for children and young people, but is not demonstrably cost-effective nor contributes significantly to wider outcomes for the community.
Grade 1: A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for children and young people, is not cost-effective and makes little or no contribution to wider outcomes for the community.

8. The following range of supporting evidence, based on information already in the public domain or previously shared with councils, was considered:

- data and performance indicators
- the council's self assessment or review of their children and young people plan
- evidence from recent inspections of schools and other settings or providers and, where available, from inspections of services, such as the youth offending team
- inspection evidence from the Audit Commission and Ofsted
- briefings and background information from the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Healthcare Commission, the Youth Justice Board and the Audit Commission.

9. This year there are three local authorities graded overall as outstanding for children's services: Gateshead; Kensington and Chelsea; and York. There are four local authorities graded as inadequate overall for children's services: Doncaster; Haringey; Milton Keynes and Surrey. Eight local authorities have been assessed as inadequate for the 'staying safe' outcome area: Birmingham; Doncaster; Essex; Haringey; Reading; Surrey; West Sussex; and Wokingham.

10. Ofsted is required under Section 138 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to undertake an annual inspection.