



HANDBOOK

CONDUCTING THE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Guidance on each stage of the process for:

- Ofsted inspectors
- CSCI Business Relationship Managers
- Local authorities

Ofsted/CSCI - 1 - 22 June 05

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A An overview of the process

Detailed information on APA can be found in the document '*Arrangements for Annual Performance Assessment*'.

Essentially this assessment replaces:

- the performance assessment of children's social care previously undertaken by CSCI; and
- the previous basis (the scorecard) for the education rating used in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

APA assesses the council's contributions to improving outcomes for children and young people and focuses on its education and social care functions. The process will result in a rating being made on the overall contribution of the council's services to outcomes for children and young people, including separate judgements on:

- the contribution of the council's social care function; and
- the contribution of the council's education function.

A rating will also be made on the council's capacity to improve. These ratings are all made on the following four point scale adopted by the Local services Inspection Forum.

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 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.

The assessment is undertaken annually by CSCI Business Relationship managers and Ofsted inspectors. Six days are allocated to the process as follows:

- 3 days for analysis;
- 1 day for meeting the authority;
- 1 day for moderation activities; and
- 1 day for writing the feedback letter.

The APA is based on a set of key judgements, supported by data and indicators, that are common with the Joint Area Review set. However, the APA data focus on education and social care service contributions, and are those on which judgements can be made without the need for fieldwork.

A range of supporting admissible evidence, based on information already in the public domain, or previously shared with authorities, is also available to Ofsted inspectors and CSCI business relationship managers. It includes:

- data and performance indicators;
- evidence from recent inspections of schools and other settings or providers and, where available, from inspections of services, such as youth offending teams;
- inspection evidence from the Audit Commission, CSCI, and Ofsted; and
- briefings and background information from the Department for Education and Skills, CSCI, the Youth Justice Board and the Audit Commission.

Crucial evidence is also provided by the council's self-assessment, which is supported by its key plan(s) for children and young people. Detailed guidance on the content and format of the self assessment can be found in the documents 'Self-assessment: guidance' and 'Self-assessment: completing the template'.

This self-assessment should include:

- a succinct summary of the overall performance of the council's services for children and young people;
- a review of how far current priorities for action are founded on an analysis of need;
- an analysis of the current overall outcomes for children and young people, the contribution of local services and the impact they are making on these outcomes;
- an evaluation of how service management and the use of resources are improving outcomes for children and young people; and
- an assessment of the effectiveness with which services work together and with children and young people and their parents and carers.

The self-assessment only needs to cover the council's social care and education functions. However, where it suits current arrangements, it might be a wider document reflecting partnership activity. It should be closely cross-referenced to the key plans for children and young people, which will be available to Ofsted inspectors and BRM. There is no intention that these plans should be analysed in their entirety as part of the APA exercise, rather that the authorities should use them to support their self-assessment statements.

Ofsted and CSCI will analyse all this information and form hypotheses that will be tested out and developed. Emerging judgements will be shared with the authority at the APA meeting and confirmed in the APA letter. Actual grades will not be published until a later stage.

Timeline:		
Setting up	In May each year, every local council provides an updated self- assessment. Other admissible evidence referred to above is collected together before the end of May.	
Analysis	This stage takes place in June and July.	
The annual performance assessment meeting	The meeting will be held by the end of July. It will be attended by Ofsted, CSCI and DfES, with an invitation extended where appropriate to the local council's partners. The agenda and attendance at the meeting are agreed with the council. The focus is on: recognising strengths, considering relative weaknesses or areas for development and any gaps in evidence. Findings emerging from the analysis stage will be discussed.	
Issuing draft letter and provisional scores	A draft letter summarising the issues discussed and including provisional judgements (but not scores) will be sent to the council within approximately five weeks of the meeting, with comments on factual accuracy invited within five working days. Comments may be about factual accuracy or about judgements where, for example, the authority believes that material evidence has been neglected. Such comments will be considered before the letter is finalised and the council will be informed of the steps taken to address the points raised and any amendments made to the text of the letter.	
Final reporting and representation	The final version of the letter, including assessment ratings, will be sent to the council at the end of October following validation of CSCI data and moderation of the provisional judgements. Ratings will be also be published to the Audit Commission at this time for CPA purposes. The council then has an opportunity to make representations against the education, social care or	

children's services judgements. Representations made at this stage can only be about perceived inaccuracies in the evidence used or in the significance afforded to that evidence; no new evidence can be submitted at this stage. Managers from CSCI and Ofsted with no previous involvement in the assessment being reviewed will consider the representations and decide whether or not any adjustments to the ratings are required. The results will be communicated to the council, and any changes notified to the Audit Commission, by the end of November.

Although Ofsted inspectors and BRMs work together to make judgements and award ratings to the authorities, for each APA a Lead inspector or BRM has been indicated. The role of this Lead is to:

- during the analysis stage, to make initial contact with the authority, through the link officer, and confirm the date for the feedback meeting and the arrangements for agreeing the agenda and attendance for that meeting;
- to agree the agenda for the meeting and confirm that in writing;
- to make appropriate arrangements for the chairing of the meeting (Ofsted or CSCI to chair);
- to put together the draft letter, using sections written by their colleague BRM or HMI, agree it with that colleague, submit it for quality assurance checks and send it to the authority for a check on factual accuracy;
- take part in moderation meetings as required;
- ensure that any amendments made to the final letter are agreed with colleagues and the authority; and
- submit the letter to the appropriate administrative staff for clearance and publication to the authority.

B The information you have

Prior to the analysis stage you will have been sent background papers including:

- 1. A spreadsheet containing:
 - BRM and HMI contact details;
 - Link officer contact details for each authority;
 - Names of directors of education/social care for children/children's services for each authority; and
 - APA meeting dates for each authority, including a note of any specific requests regarding timing.
- 2. A check list indicating tasks to be completed prior to the analysis stage.
- 3. A paper outlining the 'lead' role for BRM/HMI.
- 4. An individual checklist for each authority partly pre-populated with key dates but requiring completion.

With this handbook, you have received:

- 1. The publication on 'Arrangements for Annual performance Assessment' which contains the Key Judgements as Annex A
- 2. Two self-assessment documents sent to the authority guidance on self-assessment and the template for completion.
- 3. The dataset sent to the authority to support the completion of their self-assessment (sent separately to HMI only).
- 4. An evidence notebook.

For the analysis stage you will also have:

- 1. The completed self-assessment from the authority.
- 2. Supporting key plans for children and young people.
- 3. A summary sheet of education data (already circulated to HMI).
- 4. The APA dataset for the authority (to be sent separately to you by CSCI; for Blocks 1 these may not arrive until the first analysis day).
- 5. Briefing papers and information from Ofsted, other inspectorates and government departments (detailed below)
- 6. Other reference or supporting documents (see below).

Those in italic are provided in hard copy as well as electronically

C What the information is about

i The briefings:

Source	Contents
1. Ofsted – schools causing concern	For all authorities:
	 data* on the numbers and proportions of schools in each of the Ofsted categories of concern as at April 2005, compared with statistical neighbours' and national proportions;
	the number and proportion placed in a category in the previous 12 months, and the number and proportion (if any) that have remained in special measures for longer than the expected period.
	For some authorities where there has been HMI monitoring of schools in formal Ofsted categories of concern:
	a summary of the effect of local authority support to schools causing concern, taken from HMI's monitoring letters.
	a map showing the geographical spread of these schools
	* The statistical information is already known to the authority, and the letters have been copied to the authority.
2. Ofsted - LEA baseline	Key elements from previous LEA, Connexions and Youth Service inspections.
information	* Taken from reports already published to the authority
3. Ofsted — Early Years information	A commentary on the APA data highlighting key issues to note and pursue.
	* Taken from reports already published to the authority
4. Ofsted – Youth Service briefing	A summary of the Youth Service inspection outcomes for those authorities that have been inspected as part of the current cycle.
2	* Taken from reports already published to the authority

5. DfES Children's	A commentary including:	
Services Improvement Adviser (Education)	 summaries of information from meetings held with councils to monitor and discuss progress on performance improvement, including information gathered from government offices and specific policy teams; 	
**	comments on local contextual information in relation to the council's provision of education services;	
	a detailed interpretation of data, illuminating trends or patterns in performance;	
	 specific reference, where relevant, to vulnerable children, school improvement, service management and the five outcomes for children and young people; and 	
*,	the progress made in implementing the Change for Children programme locally.	
,	Shared with the authority in advance of publication to Ofsted	
6. Youth Justice Board	A contextual report* regarding the local Youth Offending Team including:	
	an analysis of outcomes;	
	 commentary on preventative strategies, work with the victims of crime, work with volunteers, and community reparation; 	
	a funding analysis and a commentary on management arrangements; and	
	 ranking of the YOT against national comparators and quality assurance ratings. 	
,	* The report will have already been discussed with the YOT management	
7. CSCI	A summary of evidence from any service inspections, on-going monitoring of council social care performance undertaken over the past year, and other admissible evidence.	
n 9 -	This briefing will already have been shared with the authority.	

ii Reference or supporting documents

Scrutiny of these documents is not an essential element of the APA process. However, where there are specific gaps or concerns, or where additional evidence is required to support an emerging hypothesis, reference to some of them may be helpful.

Document	The evidence it provides
Contextual information from the Audit Commission	Data and information on the population of the area and the context in which the council is operating. NB: The make up of the council will have changed since this information was provided.
Monitoring letters from Ofsted on schools in formal categories of	More detailed information about the issues facing schools, their progress in addressing these and the support provided by the authority.
concern	Where information is available about a number of schools there may be emerging themes which demonstrate the authorities approach to identification, intervention and support.
	An example of a monitoring letter is provided in the pack. Copies of these for schools in each area are available if required.
The latest Audit Commission Annual Audit letter for the authority	A report on the work of the council in relation to accounts, financial aspects of corporate governance and performance management. It makes a judgement on whether best value is being delivered, looks at the implementation of government policy and identifies failing services where remedial action may be necessary.
	For APA purposes this may provide some useful background information o the way the council works, its priorities for improvement and the context within which education and social care services for children operate.
The latest Corporate Assessment report for the authority	This report assesses community leadership and corporate arrangements and capacity to support services in delivering improvements.
	For the APA it will set a baseline on the council's approach to identifying and achieving its priorities. It also provides some clear contextual information about the authority which will offer a valuable backdrop to the self-assessment.

The council's latest Corporate Plan or Council Plan	This plan sets out the council's priorities, targets and service objectives for the current year. For the APA it provides background information demonstrating the priority placed on services for
E*	children and young people, and may also show how services are working together to achieve positive outcomes.
The 2004 CPA rating for the authority and the education scorecard	This will provide information on the council's performance in 2004.
The Children's Fund report and background information, where applicable	Where available, these reports provide an early indication of the authority's work with partners to promote the well-being of vulnerable groups of children and young people.
	For APA purposes, the report and the supporting information provide useful background on the analysis of needs, partnership working and establishing the views of children and young people. It may enable APA teams to begin to establish the council's capacity to improve, through analysing the way in which successful Children's Fund projects have been sustained.
The latest LEA inspection report	The baseline briefing should provide all the necessary information on recent LEA on recent LEA performance. However, should issues emerge in specific aspects, such as school improvement, reference to the full report (if sufficiently recent) will be helpful.
Health provider ratings	This spreadsheet provides the 2004 star ratings for health trusts.
	For APA it may provide a reference point in relation to partnership working.
The 2004 LEA Statistical profile	This provides detailed comparative information on school and pupil performance across the authority in 2004. A statistical profile has not been produced for 2005.
v a	For APA use, this may help to establish the progress an authority is making and may also set current data into a wider picture.

iii The APA dataset

This set of data is presented under the five outcomes for children and young people and service management. It was sent to authorities in April 2005 and is being subsequently updated following education checks carried out by Ofsted and the authorities themselves.

 The updated education data are included in the revised Education Summary Sheet set sent out to HMI and BRM on 20 May.

On 31 May the social care data for the current year, entered by the authorities, was submitted to CSCI as part of the self-assessment.

- BRM have access to this full APA dataset which includes the CSCI information in time for the analysis stage through their PIMs.
- It will also be provided to HMI for reference but should however be noted that for Blocks 1 and 2, the deadlines are very tight and the full information may not arrive until the first analysis day.

Validation of the CSCI information takes place over the following months and will inform the final children's social care rating and may affect the CPA rating for each authority.

iv The self-assessment

The self-assessment guidance and template were sent to authorities at the end of March. Using the APA dataset for reference, they have completed their self-assessment to show how the council's services are contributing to improving outcomes for children and young people. This completed document is provided in your analysis pack.

D The analysis stage: days 1 - 3

These three days will be spent analysing all available admissible evidence and forming hypotheses or interim judgments to share with the authority at the APA meeting.

The trail of evidence to support these judgements should be recorded as you go along.

It is suggested that Ofsted inspectors and BRM might usefully spend the first of these three days working separately, coming together on days two and three to bring together evidence gathered and to agree emerging judgements. The following process is suggested:

Day 1

- **Familiarise** yourself with the range of documentation available so that you know where you might find specific details or supporting information when needed. Do not, however, spend time reading everything in detail.
- Take a specific and detailed look at the **data** for either education or social care. Issues for consideration might include:
 - what they tell us about the authority;
 - what they don't tell us about the authority;
 - how far they provide a reliable picture of standards and achievements, especially where there are no national comparative data.

Steps to take:

- analyse the data-set to establish a profile of the outcomes achieved by children and young people in the area;
- in doing so, consider overall standards, improvement trends and consistency of evidence;
- consider whether the indicators show incidence at least in line with national or neighbour averages, and whether they show a trend of improvement;
- consider emerging hypotheses in the light of the data do they point to any areas that would be expected to feature in the authority's priorities, or to any confirming evidence of areas that do not need to be considered as priorities?
- decide what is convincing, what aspects require more evidence, and what at this stage might seem appropriate for taking forward for JAR fieldwork and analysis;
- enter your responses in the evidence notebook.

Days 2 and 3

 Working as an APA team, Ofsted and CSCI colleagues should exchange views, compare thinking and evidence, review the hypotheses, and agree issues for further investigation. Seek any links that enable you to focus on specific groups of children and young people, particular outcomes, or specific key judgements.

Steps to take:

Consider the briefings:

- What do they tell us about the authority do they help to confirm emerging judgements? If not, what issues do they raise for further investigation?
- What areas have been identified as priorities in the briefings? Do they confirm or expand those identified from the analysis of data?
- What evidence is there that services re working together effectively?

Discuss these questions in the light of your analysis of data, refine your emerging hypotheses and note your trail of evidence on the evidence notebook.

Consider the self-assessment:

- What does the self-assessment focus on? Has any new information emerged?
- Does it provide detailed and accurate needs analysis? Are the weaknesses you have identified been addressed in the self-assessment? If not, is any evidence provided that these are not a priority?
- Has the strategy for improvement been effective, and does the authority's perspective confirm the briefings? Have resources been effectively deployed?
- Does the self-assessment clearly demonstrate the impact of the authority's services? Are any barriers to improvement noted? If so, what has been done to address these?
- Is there evidence that the council's children's services are working together with other services and partners?
- What evidence does the authority provide that it has capacity for further improvement?

Review your hypotheses in the light of your analysis of the selfassessment, and note down any changes or refinements in the evidence notebook.

Where there are gaps or conflicting evidence refer to any relevant background or supporting documentation available to you, refine your emerging judgements and note the relevant evidence

Agree interim judgements:

Using all the analysis of evidence outlined above, you should agree provisional judgements focussing on:

- Recognising strengths
- considering relative weaknesses or areas for development and any gaps in evidence;
- clarifying progress made in the last year against action described in strategic plans; and
- agreeing areas for development.

These interim judgements will form the agenda for the APA meeting with the authority and the basis for them will need to be shared using the evidence trail set out in the evidence notebook.

Provisional service judgements for education and social care, and for children's services overall, will need to be made on the basis of the above analysis. If a key area is unsatisfactory this will have an impact on both the service and the overall judgement.

The outcome of the meeting will be recorded in a letter. These judgements form the basis of later ratings including the CPA rating.

NB: A Helpline is available for HMI queries regarding the education data and the Day 1 analysis process.

E Making the judgements

i What judgements are made?

APA assesses the council's contributions to improving outcomes for children and young people and focuses on its education and social care functions. The following judgements are made:

- the overall contribution of the council's services to outcomes for children and young people;
- the contribution of the council's social care function;
- the contribution of the council's education function; and
- the council's capacity to improve (this judgement will be made on the four point scale of : 4 very good, 3 good, 2 adequate, and 1 inadequate).

ii What scale and descriptors do we use?

With the exception of capacity to improve, these ratings are all made on the following four point scale adopted by the Local Services Inspectorate Forum.

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 costeffective whilst making contributions to wider outcomes for the community.
Grade 2: A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	A service that delivers 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.

iii How do we reach our judgements?

The key judgements and evidence provide the structure on which judgements are built. In reaching judgements on each outcome area, engage in the following elements referring to the relevant key judgements:

Use the data and performance indicators:	 analyse the data-set to establish a profile of the outcomes achieved by children and young people in the area, including vulnerable and other groups; consider overall standards or levels of achievement, improvement trends and consistency of evidence; and consider emerging hypotheses in the light of the data.
Consider existing inspection evidence and briefings	 analyse what the inspection evidence and briefings say about the authority and assess how far they confirm, clarify or extend emerging judgements or provide additional information to fill any gaps in data; note any new information raised; and review emerging hypotheses.
Take account of the self-assessment	 review the self-assessment to confirm, clarify or extend the evidence in the data-set and briefings; analyse the strategy for improvement, its rigour and impact; assess the validity of the self assessment; incorporate any new information; and review emerging hypotheses in preparation for the annual performance assessment meeting with the authority.

Essentially the process is an iterative one with emerging judgements reviewed as new evidence becomes available. Your focus will need to be placed on the 'big picture', but grounding this in a secure audit trail back to the detailed evidence. The evidence is not weighted, but rather is assessed for consistency, coherence and impact.

The key judgements define the scope of the performance assessment within each outcome area. The questions below generally follow these steps of providing an audit trial leading to judgements.

Questions to ask:

- What does the performance data and other existing evidence show about the outcomes achieved by children and young people (refer, where appropriate, to particular groups of children and young people)
- Are there any weaknesses which require improvement?
- Have these weaknesses been identified in the self assessment?
- Is the strategy which has been devised to tackle the weaknesses appropriate, feasible and likely to lead to improvement?
- Is there any evidence that services are working together effectively?
- How far have the views of children and young people been gathered and used to make improvements
- Have strategies and initiatives enhanced equality of opportunities and ensured a positive approach to diversity?
- Is there any evidence of impact and improvement and if not what steps have been taken to modify the strategy?

iv Making the overall judgement about the contribution of children's services

The overall judgement should be treated as a separate third judgement. It is not reached through the application of any mathematical formula, neither is it a simple aggregation of the two separate grades for social care and education. It is made by taking a balanced view of the full range of key judgements and evidence. When making this judgement:

- Remember that if a key area is unsatisfactory this will have an impact on both the service and the overall judgement.
- Consider the impact of any differences in the quality of education and social care services on children and young people overall.
- Essentially, treat the two services as of equal importance and discuss the overall impact of them combined.
- Universal, specialist and targeted services should definitely not be given different weightings.
- Place emphasis on distinguishing endemic strengths or weaknesses in systems, procedures and practice from more isolated examples of success or problem areas.

- Reach judgements in the context of local priorities which will be based on the authority's analysis and identification of need and their strategy for responding.
- Identify the key elements from the trail of evidence that lead you to the final judgement.

When making the overall judgement ensure the evidence is secure, challenge your assumptions and establish key reasons for your decision. Ask yourselves, for example:

- If we judge children's services overall as delivering well above minimum requirements for users, do we have secure evidence that at least one service is delivering at this level, and that actions taken in both services are contributing significantly to improving outcomes for children and young people? What capacity does the council demonstrate to sustain and build on these strengths?
- If we judge children's services overall as consistently delivering above minimum requirements for users, do we have secure evidence that the balance of strengths across both services and capacity to improve is consistent? What are the good features? Are there any excellent characteristics? What is the direction of travel?
- If we judge children's services overall as delivering only minimum requirements for it users, does the balance of judgements across all outcomes indicate that services together are making an adequate contribution to the outcomes for children and young people? How endemic or systemic are identified weaknesses? What capacity does the council demonstrate it has to address these weaknesses?
- If we judge children's services overall as not delivering minimum requirements for users, does the balance of judgements indicate significant weaknesses in processes and practice? Are there any areas where minimum requirements are being delivered to users? How far do identified weaknesses present barriers to improvement? What capacity does the council demonstrate it has to address these weaknesses?

v Making a capacity to improve judgement

This is based on two dimensions:

 i) the direction of travel and, in particular, the rate of improvement in outcomes; ii) the track record of local services in particular, the evidence that services have the ambition, priorities, capacity and performance management to make improvement

Evidence to make this judgement should be drawn from all outcomes. However, the self-assessment also provides evidence, and particular emphasis must be placed on:

- the accuracy of the self-assessment;
- whether initiatives are suitably resourced;
- whether services are working together; and
- whether the local council can provide evidence of impact.

F Recording the trail of evidence

Use the evidence notebook to record and summarise information as it emerges. The completed evidence notebook is required evidence for archiving and storage purposes. As a whole, the notebook will form the trail of evidence that has led to judgements and will support the preparation for the APA meeting and the drafting of the APA letter.

Steps to take in recording the trail of evidence		
Step 1 Analysis of the evidence	specific key judgements as appropriate.	
	Grading is not required but the words used should indicate clearly where the emerging judgements lie. A specific comment is required on social care responsibilities.	
Step 2 Summarising the findings for each outcome and service management and making indicative judgements	 Use the evidence from Step 1 to collate a summary sheet for each outcome area. This will be used at the moderation stage and will provide the basis of the APA meeting and letter. Identify the indicative judgement for education, social care and capacity to improve, noting the key points which support this indicative judgement. Record any findings from moderation and quality assurance which might lead to a change in this indicative judgement. 	
Step 3 Overall summary	 Summarise the main issues for education, social care, children's services and capacity to improve and enter the indicative grade for each. Show the key trail of evidence which has led to these judgements. This provides key information for the APA meeting and letter. 	
Step 4 Summative judgements	Use the indicative judgements and the overall summary to agree the judgements required. Follow the guidance provided on how judgements should be made.	

G The APA meeting: day 4

i Purposes and focus of the meeting

- **1. Feeding back on the analysis stage**: illustrating, through a secure trail of evidence, emerging judgements around the following areas:
 - outcomes that are sound/secure, and those which are weak or need further development;
 - clarification where there is conflicting evidence or where there are gaps in information and evidence;
 - providing a risk assessment for the JAR;
 - · recommendations for improvement;
- **2. Discussion with the authority:** providing an opportunity for professional debate so that:
 - reasons for assessments and emerging judgements are clarified and understood;
 - any appropriate additional information can be brought to the table and discussed.
- **3. Providing interim judgements** (but not grades) on the contribution to outcomes for children and young people of:
 - the council's children's services overall,
 - the council's education services; and
 - the council's social care services.
- **4. Providing an interim judgement** on the council's capacity to improve the contribution of its children's services to outcomes for children and young people.
- **5. Setting out the key points** that will feature in the APA letter.

ii Procedures and protocols

- Although the meeting is held in the authority, it is the joint inspectorates' meeting for the authority.
- The Ofsted inspector or the BRM will chair the meeting, but it may be appropriate for the Chief Executive or the Director of Children's Services to open the meeting
- BRM and HMI should agree roles for the meeting in line with the agenda. CSCI
 Regional Directors or PIMs may attend but the reasons for their attendance will
 be made clear and the BRM will be responsible for briefing them.
- The agenda should be provided to the authority in advance by email, agreed and published to attendees. It should be drawn from the Evidence notebook and authorities should be given a clear indication of the issues to be discussed.
- HMI and BRM should keep notes of issues or questions raised and the responses given.

iii Attendees

- The meeting should be attended by a small group including:
 - The Chief Executive
 - The Director of Children's Services (or current equivalents)
 - The lead member for children's services (or current equivalents)
 - The CSIA(E) from the DfES
 - Key officers responsible for the areas being discussed
- Where the agenda is relevant, and at the authority's invitation, key partners may also be in attendance.

iv The agenda

The following format is suggested:

- 1. Introductions and outline of the purpose of the meeting
- 2. Overview observations: themes emerging
- 3. The self-assessment: what it demonstrates clearly and where it does not offer sufficient insight or analysis of impact
- 4. Summary of emerging judgements
- 5. The reasons for these judgements (referring to the trail of evidence):
 - Areas of strength or where progress is adequately demonstrated (with reference to the five outcomes for children and young people)
 - Areas for improvement (with reference to the five outcomes for children and young people)
 - Areas for further investigation owing to gaps or inconsistencies in evidence
 - Service management and the council's capacity to improve
- 6. Areas to be recommended for scrutiny in any future joint area review
- 7. Key points that will feature in the APA letter
- 8. The next steps: moderation procedures, the draft letter, the final letter and the awarding of the grades to be taken forward into the comprehensive performance assessment.

H Moderation: day 5

It is intended that 50% of authorities will be subject to discussion on the moderation days (for further details see the document *Quality Assurance and Moderation Procedures for the Annual Performance Assessment 2005*). For all authorities subject to moderation a form (see Appendix A) should be completed at the end of the analysis stage and submitted with the summary sheets (Step 2 - 4) from the Evidence Notebook.

What the moderation day will consist of

- The emerging judgements on between seven and 10 authorities will be discussed. The day will be managed so that:
 - Small groups work on a few council assessments
 - Proposed grades and evidence leading to these conclusion are presented to the group (usually by the lead HMI or BRM)
 - Debate and discussion takes place within the group to agree the judgements and how the evidence will be presented to support it
- The process will include:
 - Peer and management challenge
 - Benchmarking by comparing trails of evidence and conclusions reached
 - Ensuring the evidence recorded is sufficient and focussed enough to support the judgements made
 - Discussion and agreement on the way in which the LSIF four-point scale applies to the judgements

What you need to prepare

- You will need to submit in advance:
 - The moderation form and the supporting elements of the Evidence Notebook
- You will need to bring with you:
 - The completed evidence notebook in which notes on the full trail of evidence are recorded.

I The APA letter: day 6

- Although a specific day has been allocated in the programme for letter writing, the task required will need to be spread across a number of days. In total, however, it is not anticipated that more that one day of your time will be required for each authority.
- Individual checklists have been provided for each block and a 'window' of time has been allocated for the whole of the letter writing process (all stages as listed below).
- Although these checklists set out indicative dates for each stage, APA
 teams will need to negotiate and agree the dates between themselves and
 with their authority to suit other commitments and leave arrangements.
 However, please note that as far as possible the final date in the writing
 window should be treated as the date on which the whole letter writing
 process is complete.
- By 12 May, you were asked to send an amended version of the checklist to mberge@ofsted.gov.uk so that arrangements for readers and management clearance of letters could be finalised. If subsequent changes are necessary following discussions with the authority, please keep us informed.

	Letter writing stages
Stage 1 Preparing the draft letter	The BRM and the Ofsted inspector both contribute to the APA letter and at the end of the analysis stage separate responsibilities should be agreed.
diait letter	The person with lead responsibility should bring the two contributions together, using the template provided. Agreement with the final draft should be secured from the other inspector/BRM.
	The letter, with Steps 3 and 4 from the Evidence Notebook, should be sent to the CSCI manager and Ofsted management reader for comment (list of readers and contact details published separately)
Stage 2 Responding to	Comments from both the CSCI manager and the Ofsted management reader (on Moderation Form 2 Appendix D) will be forwarded to the person with lead responsibility.
management comments	These should be discussed (by telephone – no meeting is necessary) with the partner HMI/BRM, responses agreed and any necessary amendments made to the text.
	The amended letter should be forwarded to the Link Officer for the authority to comment on the factual accuracy of the contents. Five working days are allowed for this process.

Stage 3 Respondir

Responding to the authority's comments

- Comments from the authority will be forwarded to the person with lead responsibility.
- These should be discussed with the partner HMI/BRM, responses agreed and any necessary amendments made to the text.
- The amended letter, with the confirmed Step 4 summary of grades from the Evidence Notebook, should be submitted for proof reading, confirmation of judgements, final clearance, and publication to the authority. It will then be archived by Ofsted and stored by CSCI on PADI.

The template

- 1. The letter should be no longer than 4-6 sides of A4 and should be written to the agreed template. It should:
 - Confirm the outcome of the discussions at the APA feedback meeting
 - Give a clear overview of emerging judgements, including areas for improvement and areas for JAR follow-up
 - Provide information on each outcome and services' contribution to these (based on key judgements)
 - Consider the extent of partnership working
 - Consider the contribution of universal, preventive and targeted services
 - Conclusion summarising strengths, areas for improvement, areas for JAR fieldwork
 - Include a common statement on the next steps (checks for accuracy, CPA ratings etc)
- 2. The Evidence Notebook should provide the key evidence, information and judgements that form the basis of the letter. It is anticipated that the key points can be cut and pasted across into the letter template in the first instance and then redrafted into letter format.
- 3. As a guide the following format is suggested as a model:
 - **Being Healthy** a relatively short section (one paragraph) but stressing the contributions of local authority services directly to health
 - **Staying Safe** approximately one page of A4 with a report on the council's effectiveness in following up critical incidents, and a clear focus on child protection
 - Enjoying and Achieving approximately one page of A4 with a specific focus on school improvement
 - Making a Positive Contribution a relatively short section (one paragraph)

• **Achieving Economic Well-Being** – approximately one page of A4 but ensuring reference to sixth forms and council-only 14-19 provision and including a comment on the effectiveness of the council's strategic partnership with the local Learning and Skills Council.

In addition:

- Include a judgement on **looked after children** and children with **learning difficulties and/or disabilities** in each outcome
- **Service management** approximately one page of A4 with a focus on partnership working, the quality of the self-assessment, user focus including the views of children and young people, and workforce development.
- 4. An exemplar letter is attached at Appendix B for reference.

J Final reporting and representation

The draft letter

On receipt of the draft letter councils are invited to comment not only on factual accuracy, but also, on any concerns about how the provisional judgements have been reached on the basis of the admissible evidence. Any such concerns will be considered before the report is finalised, discussed with the council and a resolution sought. Councils will be informed of the steps taken to address the points raised and any amendments made to the letter. Comments made and dealt with in this way will not be regarded as a formal representation.

The judgements and assessments indicated in the draft letter are subject to later moderation procedures (following consideration of CSCI data for 2004-2005, including Key Thresholds, and findings and judgements from current service inspections).

The final letter

Following validation of social care data and moderation of the provisional judgements, the final letter will be sent to the authority in late October with guidance on publication arrangements.

This letter contains the final judgements for children's services, education services, social care for children and the council's capacity to improve these services.

As outlined in the document 'Arrangements for Annual Performance Assessment', the children's services final judgement contributes to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) and will be published to the Audit Commission at this time. The social care judgement contributes to the social care star rating.

Councils are asked to:

- present the letter to an open meeting of the relevant executive committee of the council by the end of January 2006;
- make the letter available to members of the public at the same time;
- copy the letter to the council's appointed auditor, and to relevant partners.

Should councils wish to make representation on any of these judgements, they are asked to inform Ofsted and CSCI of their intention to do so by 1 November and submit their representation by 7 November.

Representation procedures

If it has not been possible to resolve concerns informally at the draft stage, the council may decide to lodge a written representation. The representation must be made by the deadlines indicated above. Representation can only be about perceived inaccuracies in the evidence used or the significance afforded to the evidence. It is not the opportunity for the council to enter new evidence.

Representation may be about the social care for children and young people judgement, the education judgement or the children's services judgement. Procedures in each of these cases are as follows:

Representation against the judgement on social care for children

The representation should be sent to CSCI Corporate Office and copied to the relevant Regional Director.

A panel of two CSCI managers and an external independent person will consider the representations. Members of the panel will read and evaluate the representation in the light of the recorded evidence and any response from the relevant Regional Director and BRM. Members of the panel will offer an impartial view and will have no previous involvement in the judgements being reviewed.

If consideration of the representation results in an amended judgement, the impact of this change on the overall children's services judgement will be evaluated by a joint panel in accordance with the procedures described below. Outcomes will be recorded and communicated to the council by the end of November.

Representation against the judgement on education

The representation should be copied in writing to the Divisional Manager of the Children's Services Inspection Division at Ofsted.

A panel of three Ofsted managers will consider the representations. Members of the panel will read and evaluate the representation in the light of the recorded evidence and any response from HMI. Members of the panel will

offer an impartial view and will have no previous involvement in the judgements being reviewed.

The panel will decide on an appropriate response to the representation. If consideration of the representation results in an amended judgement, the impact of this change on the overall children's services judgement will be evaluated by a joint panel in accordance with the procedures described below. Outcomes will be recorded and communicated to the council by the end of November.

Representation against the judgement on children's services

Any representation against the children's services judgement should be copied in writing to the Divisional Manager of the Children's service Inspection Division at Ofsted. Both Ofsted and CSCI will contribute to a joint response.

A joint panel with appropriate expertise, consisting of managers from CSCI and Ofsted, will consider the representations. Members of the panel will read and evaluate the representation in the light of the recorded evidence and any response form HMI or BRM. Members of the panel will offer an impartial view and will have no previous involvement in the judgements being reviewed.

The panel will decide on an appropriate response to the representation. The justification for these decisions will be recorded and communicated to the council by the end of November. Changes in ratings will be communicated to the Audit Commission at the same time, in order that CPA ratings can be reviewed and updated as necessary.

Review of the children's services judgement in the light of amended education and social care judgements

The implications of a changed social care or education judgement on the overall children's services judgement will be considered by a joint panel consisting of managers from CSCI and Ofsted. Members of the panel will review and moderate the children's services judgement in the light of the revised single service judgement and agree an appropriate response.

The justification for these decisions will be recorded and communicated to the council by the end of November. Changes in ratings will be communicated to the Audit Commission at the same time, in order that CPA ratings can be reviewed and updated as necessary.

Appendix A Moderation forms for completion (available on CD and PADI)

Integrated Children's Services Framework Annual Performance Assessment

	Moderation Form
Council:	
CSCI BRM:	
Ofsted Inspector:	
	Reasons for selecting for Moderation
	Areas of Concern
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Please return this completed form with the summary sheets for the Evidence Notebook (Steps 2 - 4) to: mberge@ofsted.gov.uk and upload to PADI (CSCI colleagues)

Moderation Draft APA Letter				
Council:				
Manager				
Name:				
Job Title:			9000074 95000	
Organisation	: □ CSCI	□ Ofsted		
Action required or suggested				
Can the draft letter be sent to council? (following amendments)				
	☐ Yes	□ No		
Signed:				
Dated:				

For return to the HMI or BRM with lead responsibility for the APA

Appendix B Exemplar APA letter

DRAFT EXEMPLAR ONLY

Dr Jack Blade,
Director of Children's Services,
Sharpston Metropolitan Council,
The Municipal Centre,
Sharpston,
Bluntshire, SH3 4XF

Dear,

Annual performance assessment of Sharpston Metropolitan Council's education and social care services 2005

This letter summarises the findings of the meeting held on 12th April 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, particularly in the way that healthy lifestyles are promoted through partnership between key services. The incidence of teenage pregnancy has declined considerably over the last two years and is now below the national trend. There have been no drug-related deaths of children and young people under 18 during that period. The proportion of schools participating in the National Healthy Schools Standards is high compared with the national average. The health needs of looked after children are met effectively and indicators exceed national averages.

The effectiveness of the actions taken to promote the mental health of children and young people is inconsistent. Problems in recruiting and retaining social workers who can work with closely with multidisciplinary CAMHS teams have not been tackled sufficiently rigorously.

Staying Safe

Although outcomes are satisfactory overall, there are some important weaknesses. Children and young people are provided with the safe environment to which they are entitled. The authority's policies show good recognition of what constitutes a safe environment and their implementation is monitored consistently and rigorously, particularly in relation to children and young people with disabilities.

There has been a reduction in the numbers on the child protection register over the last two years. The authority has clear referral systems, families and children at risk are identified early and the quality of preventative support is good. All cases are now reviewed within timescale, an improvement on the situation eighteen months ago. There has also been an improvement recently in the support for looked after children, all of whom now have an assigned social worker. Effective protocols have been established between education and social services in supporting looked after children and those with disabilities and special educational needs. There is a clear process within the council for collating, monitoring and reviewing information from CRB checks. Reponses to Section Eight reviews are monitored regularly by senior managers and elected members.

Protocols with the health service are insecure and the authority has had to work hard to overcome delays in the completion of assessments resulting from this. A high proportion of children and young people are educated other than at school. However, these pupils do not always receive their full entitlement in terms of hours of tuition and monitoring of this area by the authority is weak.

Enjoying and Achieving

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory. The overall quality of early years provision is very good and supports children well in enabling them to meet the early learning goals. Results at the end of Key Stage 1 are in line with national averages, although, for reading, the rates of improvement are marginally worse than for statistical neighbours. The support provided by the education service in implementing the national literacy strategy has not focused sufficiently on this weaker area.

Standards in key stages 3, 4 and 5 are in line with averages nationally and for statistical neighbours. However, results at GCSE have remained at around the same level for the last three years. The education service has recognised the need to provide a more rigorous challenge to its secondary schools and there is recent evidence of improvement in some schools, particularly those within the excellence cluster. Progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is below average but this is compensated for by a higher than average rate of

progress between Key Stage 2 and 3. There are significant gender differences in performance at every key stage but particularly at Key Stage 3 where girls outperform boys by 14 per cent. The proportion of looked after children gaining one or more GCSE is in line with the national average but below that for similar authorities. In addition, the council has worked effectively with carers to increase the proportion of looked after children who take advantage of extra-curricular activities provided by schools.

Attendance has improved and surplus places have been reduced so that, on both measures, Sharpston is in line with other authorities. However, the rate of exclusions is rising, in spite of a focus on reintegration and widening opportunities through alternative provision.

Support for schools placed in formal categories of concern by Ofsted is effective. The speed of removal from a specific category is better than the national average. In the past the authority has not always been sufficiently proactive in identifying and tackling emerging weaknesses in these schools. However, monitoring is now more rigorous and the authority's improved proactive approach to intervention has resulted in fewer schools being identified as causing concern.

Over the last three years, the council's provision of youth and community facilities has been restructured and refocused. As a result, there has been increased involvement by young people, particularly those with special educational needs or disabilities. The council's monitoring of this provision shows that the wider range of support has enabled these particular young people to have fun in a safe environment and to take part in programmes to increase their knowledge and skills. At present, only a small proportion of this work leads to accreditation, although the authority has recently introduced a well-based plan to bring about improvements in this area.

Making a Positive Contribution

Outcomes in this area are unsatisfactory. The rate of youth crime overall is in line with national averages and has remained thus for the last three years. The authority has a wide range of projects to combat re-offending but their impact has not been analysed. There is a lower rate of re-offending by those who have been in custody but overall re-offending rates have increased.

The majority of children and young people are given adequate support in managing changes in their lives. However, there has been a large reduction over the last two years in the proportion of looked after children who contributed their opinions at reviews. The percentage of reviews completed within statutory timescales has also fallen. The local authority has put

strategies in place to help children and young people with disabilities and special education needs to manage the transition between specific phases in their lives. However, the results of a recent survey commissioned by the council give contradictory messages about their effectiveness, with a considerable number of young people, parents and carers expressing discontent, especially with transition to adult support services. The authority has established a number of fora to elicit the views of children and young people. However, these do not consistently include a representative range of children and young people. Representation of those with learning difficulties and disabilities is limited and there is no adequate system for eliciting the views of very young children. A further weakness is the lack of availability of information in community languages. It is unclear how the views of children and young people influence policy or how elected members take account of them.

Achieving Economic Well-being

Outcomes in this area are satisfactory overall. However, there are some weaknesses in the support given to looked after children and children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities. In particular, they are not supported effectively in making the transition to adult life and economic independence.

Overall, the quality of education provided for 14 to 19 year olds is satisfactory and the proportion of young people progressing to higher education or training is in line with national averages. There is good collaboration in the planning and delivering of post 16 education and training and the authority works effectively with the local Learning and Skills Council, particularly in developing a wider range of vocational options. Standards of education provided by schools' sixth forms in the more deprived wards within the authority tend to be below the average nationally and for schools in similar circumstances. The authority has recently targeted additional educational and other resources on these wards and has sound systems in place to monitor the impact of this additional investment.

Summary

Strengths	Areas for improvement	
 Being Healthy: the promotion of healthy lifestyles for children and young people 	Being Healthy.promoting children and young people's mental health	

 Staying Safe: providing children and young people with a safe environment child protection procedures support for looked after children 	 Staying Safe: collaboration with the health service procedures for establishing the whereabouts and identity of missing children
 Enjoying and achieving: the quality of early years provision support for schools in Ofsted categories of concern the involvement of looked after children and children and young people with special educational needs in recreational activities 	 Enjoying and achieving: support for reading at Key Stage1 differences in performance between boys and girls proportion of looked after children gaining one or more GCSE the rate of exclusions
Making a positive contribution:	 Making a positive contribution: Increasing re-offending rates Lack of reduction in youth crime over three years The reduction in proportion of children and young people contributing to reviews Support given to children and young people at significant points of transition
 Achieving economic well-being Good collaboration with LSC in delivering post-16 education and training. 	 Achieving economic well-being Support for looked after children and those with SEN at points of transition.

Service Management

The authority has collaborated closely with relevant partners in analysing needs and setting appropriate, challenging targets for improvement. It is unclear, however, how the views of parents, carers and children and young people have been taken into account in establishing priorities for development.

Substantial progress is being made in moving towards the production of a single children and young people's plan from 2006. The current plans tend to

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focus on processes rather than outcomes and this makes it difficult to assess impact and to establish the extent to which strategies and policies provide value for money. The education service has a clearer knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses than when it was last inspected and this is reflected in the quality of the self-assessment which is generally accurate in identifying areas for improvement.

The authority has developed strategies to increase collaborative work between agencies and there are sound examples of services beginning to work together, for example to improve provision for looked after children. However, integrated work is not yet routinely established.

In recent years, the authority has experienced difficulties in recruitment and retention which have detracted from the implementation of policies in some areas.

The council has adequate capacity to improve further.

Areas for exploration in the Joint Area Review:

Being Healthy

The action taken to promote children and young people's mental health:

- work force issues in relation to social care and CAMHS
- the value for money gained from the high expenditure on partnership activities with health

Staying Safe

Identity and whereabouts of missing children:

 arrangements for sharing information when children and young people move across boundaries or to an unknown destination

Enjoying and achieving

Provision for children who do not attend school:

 action to ensure that children excluded form school receive their full educational entitlement

Making a positive contribution

Action taken to prevent offending

 the range of activities and support to assist children and young people in leading law abiding and constructive lives

The support for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities

• the contradictory messages from families and young people concerning support at points of significant transition.

Provisional judgements

At this stage in the process, it is our assessment that overall children's services in Sharpston Metropolitan Council deliver minimum requirements for children and young people. Both social care and education services deliver at this level but there are slightly more strengths in the education service. The council's capacity to improve its services is satisfactory.

We hope that you will agree that these are an accurate representation of the issues discussed at out meeting and that they will be useful to you and your colleagues in further improving outcomes for children and young people in your local area.

Yours sincerely,

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