



Joint area review

Trafford children's services authority area

**Better
education
and care**

Review of services for children and young people

Adult Learning Inspectorate
Audit Commission
Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)
Healthcare Commission
HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
HM Inspectorate of Court Administration
HM Inspectorate of Prisons
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Introduction

1. This joint area review was conducted using the arrangements required under Section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of nine inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), the Healthcare Commission (CHAI), the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), and the Audit Commission. The review was undertaken according to the requirements of the *Framework for the inspection of children's services*.

2. The review was linked to the contemporaneous corporate assessment of the local council by the Audit Commission and its findings are represented in the relevant part of the corporate assessment report.

3. This review describes the outcomes achieved by children and young people growing up in the Trafford area and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being. Joint area reviews focus on the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and are well prepared to secure economic well-being.

4. The review evaluates the collective contribution made to each outcome for children and young people by relevant services in the area. It also judges the contributions made by the council's services overall and, specifically, its education and children's social care services. Particular attention is given to joint action by local services on behalf of those groups of children and young people who are vulnerable to poor outcomes. Two such groups are covered in detail: children and young people who are looked after by the council; and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

5. The review took place in two stages consisting in total of three weeks over a six-week period. The first stage reviewed all existing evidence including:

- self-assessment undertaken by local public service providers
- a survey of children and young people
- performance data
- the findings of the contemporaneous inspection of the youth offending service
- planning documents
- information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day care provision
- evidence gathered during the earlier Youth Offending Team inspection
- briefings from staff within inspectorates, commissions and other public bodies in contact with local providers.

6. The second stage included inspection fieldwork. This included studies of how far local services have improved outcomes for a small sample of children

and young people, some of whom have the most complex needs, and a study of provision in one neighbourhood in Partington. It also included gathering evidence on ten key judgements, selected because of their critical importance to improving outcomes for children and young people in the local area. This included discussions with elected members of the local authority and their equivalents in other public agencies, officers from these agencies, service users, and community representatives. A review of case files for children and young people receiving support from a number of local agencies was also included.

Context

7. Trafford is one of ten metropolitan boroughs in Greater Manchester, extending from Hale and Altrincham in the south, through Sale and Stretford to Urmston and Old Trafford Park in the North. This area is extremely diverse in its mix of population, patterns of employment and levels of deprivation. Trafford's total population is 211,800 of which 52,548 are children and young people aged 0-19 years. The school population is approximately 34,500 and 8.3% are from black and minority ethnic communities. The population density is five times higher than the national average with an age profile similar to the national picture.

8. Trafford has many areas that can be viewed as affluent, but also contains several wards and neighbourhoods of significant social deprivation, characteristically linked to higher incidences of crime and disorder, health inequalities and barriers to higher education and employment opportunities. The Indices of Deprivation 2004 place Trafford 136 out of 354. Of the 138 neighbourhoods in the borough 22 are within the 20% most deprived, with nine within the 10% most deprived, in England. Four of these most deprived neighbourhoods are located in the Clifford ward, one of which is in the top 1% most deprived nationally and Bucklow St Martins has at least two areas falling within this band.

9. Pre-school learning and care provision is delivered by the full range of voluntary, private and statutory sectors. There are 97 schools in Trafford serving the school population. Primary education is delivered by 73 schools. Secondary education is based on selection at age 11, with seven grammar schools and 11 high schools. There are six special schools, three primary and three secondary, which meet the full spectrum of special educational needs. Just over a quarter of the schools are denominational. There are three Pupil Referral Units in the area. The functions of the Key Stage 1 and 2 Pupil Referral Units are exercised within Longford Park School.

10. Services for children in Trafford are delivered by the Children and Young People's Service, which incorporates early years, children social services, education, Children's Fund, youth offending, Connexions and the youth service. This partnership is going through a period of transition from a limited company to a Trust. An independent review (The Brophy Report) was jointly

commissioned by the council and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) in December 2004 to examine the organisational arrangements, resulting in a report in 2005 which is now being implemented by the board.

11. Two PCTs, Trafford North PCT and Trafford South PCT, commission and deliver health care services to the local population. Additionally, services are provided through an acute Trust, Trafford Healthcare NHS Trust and other hospitals (Wythenshawe and Central Manchester and Manchester Children's Hospitals). The merger of the PCTs into a single Trust is planned and public consultation is now taking place on the reconfiguration of hospital and acute services for children and young people in Greater Manchester.

12. Learning and Skills Council Greater Manchester is a partner with the local authority, Connexions, colleges, training providers, and schools in addressing the 14-19 strategy. Post-16 education and training is provided by two further education/ tertiary colleges, eight sixth-form schools, 17 work-based training providers. Entry to Employment provision (E2E) is managed by Employment and Regeneration Partnership, a local provider which has an average of 30 places. Adult and Community Learning including Family Learning is provided by Community Learning Trafford.

Summary report

Outcomes for children and young people

13. **Outcomes for most children and young people in Trafford are good.** Children and young people are generally healthy, appear safe, enjoy school and leisure activities and are achieving well. Most children and young people behave responsibly, contribute positively to their communities and are supported to achieve economic wellbeing. Partnership arrangements to deliver integrated services are in place and are now leading to improved outcomes for most children and young people. A few areas of services are under-developed and are not leading to such good outcomes for some groups of the most vulnerable children and young people. This includes children who are excluded from schools and attending Pupil Referral Units, and young people who are in need of supported accommodation and housing. Services to children and young people with mental health problems are adequate and there has been a significant reduction in waiting times for services in the past 18 months.

14. Trafford is at the top of the national league tables for educational achievement including GCSEs and GCE A-levels, with good quality educational provision for the majority of children and young people of school age in the borough. Services to the comparatively small number of children who are excluded from school are in need of further development. The area recognises this as a priority for improvement. There is a good range of post-16 provision but collaboration in planning is inconsistent in some aspects of the service including for some of the most vulnerable young people.

15. Most children and young people feel safe in and out of school, but some feel less safe in parts of Trafford due to difficulties of access to transport, as in Partington, and to incidents of bullying on public transport. Road safety in Trafford is a high priority with reduced hospital admissions for the under 18s as the result of road traffic accidents. Domestic violence, drugs and alcohol abuse remain relatively high in parts of the borough and are significant components of referrals to social care services. The partnership is responding to these pressures and developing strategies to reduce this incidence.

16. Outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are adequate. Trafford council and partners are making commendable progress in reducing the number of looked after children placed outside the borough and have established effective arrangements to commission and monitor placements. Social care services for children and young people have significantly improved in the last 18 months and there is now evidence of improved outcomes for looked after children and those in need of protection. Children and young people in Trafford are able to express their views on the plans and services affecting their lives and have good support services to enable them to do this.

The impact of local services

Being Healthy

17. **The work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good.** Parents and carers are provided with focused support and advice to help them with parenting. They also receive satisfactory information about preventive services and the provision of treatment. Immunisation and vaccination rates are very good. There is 100% access to a general practitioner within two working days and to a primary care professional within one working day. Children and young people are given support to encourage healthy lifestyles and there is wide participation in the 'Healthy Schools' initiative throughout Trafford. A range of effective projects and initiatives address important issues such as sexual health, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and substance misuse and smoking cessation. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) have improved over the last year with reductions in waiting times for access to services. Access to Tier 4 services for Youth Offending Team cases is reduced, with a gap in 16 to 18 provision. However, overall, 97% of all young offenders are offered screening and those with identified substance misuse needs receive specialist assessments within 10 days. Health services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are adequate with some good features. Plans are being implemented to establish more local and integrated methods of health service delivery. Access to dental services is restricted in some parts of the borough because of a lack of availability of dentists. The degree of planned change within the local NHS is considerable and involves both acute and primary care services for children.

Staying safe

18. **The work of all services for keeping children safe is adequate.**

Child protection is a high priority across the council and health services. Children assessed as most at risk are protected satisfactorily through multi-agency collaboration. A wider safeguarding culture, through partnership between statutory and voluntary agencies, is developing. Arrangements for establishing the local children's safeguarding board (LCSB) as an influential and accountable entity are yet to be finalised. Deployment of resources across services is generally adequate to provide a timely response to child protection concerns. However, deployment of police resources and communication across the police force do not always support timely investigations and participation in child protection conferences. The responsiveness and quality of front line social work services have improved to a level that is consistently adequate and increasingly good. Improvements have been achieved through a well managed case-file audit. Lessons from recent serious case reviews are disseminated but implementation of action plans is not monitored rigorously across all services. The number of children on the child protection register is in line with the national average and all children on it are allocated a qualified social worker.

19. An accessible range of family support services is available to reduce the incidence of family breakdown and to support children and young people in need of protection. There is an increasing emphasis on prevention and finding new ways to support children and families in need. There is scope to extend these services across Trafford to ensure greater consistency of services and access to them. Disabled children and their families are positive about the support available. Looked after children are safeguarded in their placements and supported through well co-ordinated multi-agency care plans. There has been marked improvement in the planning and support services for looked after children in the past 18 months. Although care leavers are well supported by the leaving care service, there is a lack of safe accommodation and supported housing. The council's analysis of its performance in relation to safeguarding is accurate and informed by new systems to generate good management information.

Enjoying and achieving

20. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good.**

The provision of early years childcare and education is good and there are well-established multi-agency links in place to provide early intervention for those children who require additional support. The vast majority of children and young people in Trafford achieve highly, attendance in schools is very good and most children have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy school. Schools are well supported by the council in ensuring that educational provision is of good quality. Intervention is well targeted and proportionate to needs. Over the last two years, the School Improvement Service has provided effective support to

schools causing concern and overall, pupil progress has improved and is now good in most cases.

21. The educational attainment of looked after children is satisfactory. There is a strategic action plan in place to raise the attainment of looked after children but not all schools are fully aware of this. Progression rates to training and further education are improving. School provision for children with learning difficulties/and or disabilities is good and meets their needs. However, the council now recognises that its services to support those who are not educated at school require considerable improvement, and appropriate plans are in place to improve this aspect of its provision. Currently, provision and accommodation is unsuitable and some young people do not receive their full educational entitlement.

Making a positive contribution

22. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is adequate.** Targeted preventive programmes have been developed effectively by a range of services and these are used well by young people at risk of offending and already known to the Youth Offending Team. Overall crime figures show a 16% decline in the last 12 months and youth nuisance incidents have fallen by 13%. However, the percentage of young people re-offending (59%) is well above the national average (48%) and an increasing number of looked after young people have received final warnings and convictions at a level that is also above the national average.

23. The council and its partners are working effectively to enable children and young people to develop socially and emotionally. Children and young people develop positive relationships and many take part in activities that help them to develop a sense of responsibility. There are increasing opportunities for young people to take part in consultation activities and in influencing decisions about services for them, particularly at a local level. Good support is available to those young people who are experiencing particular difficulties such as teenage pregnancy and drug and alcohol-related problems. Support is less effective for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities when they move from children's to adult services.

Achieving economic well-being

24. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well being is good.** A good range of regeneration initiatives has been developed for the most deprived areas and families make good use of the services provided through the children's centre. The borough is implementing its 14-19 strategy, which makes clear the strong commitment to partnership working between the local authority, the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and Connexions. The access that young people have to a broad curriculum at Key Stage 4 has improved significantly

over the last year. The Connexions service provides good support to individuals at points of transition. Participation rates in post-16 education and training are high. The housing needs of some vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds who are not accommodated in their family homes, including care leavers, are not always being fully met. While there is a good range of post-16 provision, there is patchy collaboration in the planning of services and services are not consistently good for all young people, including some of the most vulnerable. A few schools in the borough offer minimal or no vocational options to the 14-19 age group.

Service management

25. **The management of services for children and young people is good.** The work to date on setting shared ambitions is adequate. Strong political leadership within the council is committed to improving services for children and young people. There is a history of joint working in Trafford, particularly between the council and health agencies through the limited company created in 2002 to deliver children's and young people's services. Work on establishing a new strategic partnership to replace the limited company board is underway and this will provide opportunities for wider partnerships in the delivery of all services. Prioritisation is also adequate. The draft Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) contains a set of relevant priorities and it is currently the subject of consultation. A working partnership with shared aims and agreed ways of working together is being developed. There are some good examples where priorities have been set leading to improved outcomes for children and families.

26. Current capacity and that for further improvement is good. A director of children's services has been in place since April 2004 and together with senior managers, provides effective and strong leadership. Political commitment, through the lead member, is also strong. Significant additional resources have been found for children's social care services and resources are well managed. Trafford has established some robust services using existing resources and in the context of comparatively low levels of external funding. Generally, services give good value for money.

27. Performance management arrangements are generally good. There have been some imaginative developments in education and social care services and the council is able to demonstrate a number of improvements to services through effective performance management. However, plans for managing performance across the partnership are at an early stage and there is scope to develop joint processes for performance monitoring. The work of the Children and Young People's Service Board is gathering momentum and the potential for effective partnership working across the borough is considerable.

Grades

Grades awarded:

4: outstanding; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate

	Local services overall	Council services	Health services
Being healthy	3		
Staying safe	2		
Enjoying and achieving	3		
Making a positive contribution	2		
Achieving economic well-being	3		
Service management	3		
Capacity to improve	3	3	
Children's services		3	
The education service		3	
The social care services for children		2	
The health service for children			3

Recommendations

For immediate action

- Improve the quality of behaviour support by ensuring that there is a coherent behaviour support framework that is understood and accessible to all schools and that the behaviour support improvement plan has identified measurable outcomes.
- Improve educational provision for all children and young people who have been permanently excluded from school, including safe accommodation for care leavers.
- Review the housing needs of young people across the borough and formulate a joint strategy and implementation plan to meet the needs of all young people.

For action over the next six months

- Examine ways to ensure safe access to education and leisure services for all children and young people across the borough.
- Within the 14-19 strategy, strengthen collaboration between post-16 providers to ensure that the needs of vulnerable groups and those who find it difficult to access provision are more adequately met.
- Evaluate current arrangements for the engagement of the police in all safeguarding activities and agree joint strategies for improved engagement.

For action in the longer term

- Review CAMHS to develop effective strategies for outreach services for children and young people with mental health needs.
- Review the provision of dental services and promote more consistent access to dental services by all children, including those from the more deprived areas of the borough.

Main report

Outcomes for children and young people

26. Local services have a good impact on outcomes for most children and young people in Trafford.

27. The self-assessment produced by the council and partners accurately describes the range of services currently provided in order to improve outcomes, the priorities set and progress to date. It details the current range of services and performance against national and local targets. While there is evidence of good progress in most areas of service, for example child protection, looked after children, and education attainment, some services for a minority of the most vulnerable children and young people are in need of further development if they are to have the planned impact and offer greater consistency of access.

28. The management of services for children and young people in Trafford is good overall. The ambition of the council and its partners is adequate. Political commitment within the council to improve services for children and young people is strong. The recently revised Community Strategy, re-launched in January 2006, includes clear and challenging ambitions for children and young people based on needs analysis, consultation with local people and an awareness of where performance needs to improve. Having gone through stages of development, the partnership is now emerging as a strong force for service improvement in Trafford. A whole systems view of services is being taken which will ensure coherent and consistent planning for children's services.

29. The capacity of the council and its partners to deliver better outcomes for children and young people is good. Although the work of some partner agencies is stronger on the ground than it is strategically, there is a productive history of joint working in Trafford. The council and partners have a good grasp of what needs to be done to make services consistently good across the whole borough, and plan to focus on the key areas of service which will have impact for all children and young people, including the most disadvantaged.

Impact of local services

Being healthy

30. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Most aspects of health have an increasingly high priority across the borough with generally positive partnership working. The current range of health services in Trafford for children, young people, parents and carers is good with the majority of health targets for children and young people being met. Although formal joint commissioning

arrangements between health and other partners are yet to be fully established, including the use of joint budgets and agreements, the PCTs have a single management structure in place which facilitates patient-led commissioning in the NHS in Trafford. There is good evidence of service integration at local practice level and plans are being implemented to establish some multi-agency teams from April 2006. There is a common framework for the screening of health needs and this enables parents, carers, children and young people to be appropriately involved in the assessment and planning arrangements.

31. The 'Healthy Schools' initiative has been very well adopted across the borough with 78% schools participating and over half achieving the Healthy Schools Award. Work in schools is having a positive impact on diet and healthy eating. PCT strategies, alongside the work of the promoting physical activity group, is having a positive impact on obesity and improving diet. Programmes are in place which cover various topics to help parents and carers understand the emotional needs of children and young people. These include post-natal groups, sleep groups, toddler advice groups and Webster Stratton courses. Access to suitably qualified and named health care professionals in the range of health services is good. Specific initiatives, led by midwives and health visitors resulted in a 15% increase in breastfeeding between April and September 2005 bringing the rate in Trafford in line with the national average. The number of women smoking during pregnancy is reducing in the borough although there is some differential between the north and south of the borough.

32. There is evidence of multi-agency working in a range of preventive services. The Sale Talk Shop is able to demonstrate significant links with a full range of partners including Brook Advisory. The Children's Centre at Partington offers access to a full range of professionals and provides facilities that are appropriate for the needs of the locality and are very much in demand. The locations of these services are within areas of greatest need and illustrate a planned move to address issues of health inequality and access. They provide good models for future developments across the borough. Teenage pregnancy rates in Trafford are lower than the national average for both under 18s and under 16s. There is good evidence of continued partnership working within Trafford's Teenage Pregnancy Strategy leading to further reductions. There is a highly successful teenage mother's group that addresses a wide range of problems and issues faced by young mothers. Although part of a wider and national problem, dental provision in Trafford needs urgent consideration, as the borough has only been able to recruit three dentists onto the new NHS Dental contract.

33. Mental Health services for children and young people are adequate. There has been a substantial reduction in waiting times and an improved level of service to young people. Consideration needs to be given to evaluating the impact of the service and the potential for strengthening outreach services. The requirement to provide 24 hour cover has been the subject of Strategic Health Authority discussion and it is anticipated that this will lead to changes in the

configuration of services. The joint CAMHS strategy needs to be underpinned by joint service commissioning and performance management arrangements.

34. Looked after children receive very good health support, including the necessary health assessments, checks and care. There is a designated community paediatrician for looked after children and a Community Nurse specifically to address the needs of this group. All looked after children are registered with a GP and a dentist. Brook Advisory provides a sexual health outreach service to children's homes and offers support and advice to staff working with looked after children. The provision of health services for children and young people with disabilities is generally good. Parents and carers report that once they had gained access to services these were often helpful and appropriate. The review team saw examples where health practitioners and other partners had concentrated their resources to positive effect.

35. Health professionals in Trafford are active in benchmarking and comparing their performance with neighbouring areas. The self-assessment accurately reflects the current impact of services and the need for further consolidation of partnership working in order to establish more integrated and consistent services across the borough. It also highlighted where good access for all children and young people in need is achieved. The current level of organisational change within local health services in the borough and Greater Manchester is considerable but this is being carefully planned to ensure that services are not disrupted.

Staying safe

36. **The work of all services to keep children and young people safe is adequate.** A good range of initiatives is in place to improve the safety of children and young people in Trafford. These are contributing to reduced incidence of deaths/serious accidents on roads and in homes. Young people in the area have mixed views about whether the area is safe, but they are aware of, and avoid, known danger spots. Some young people experience barriers to accessing education and leisure services due to concerns about the location of some key services and lack of adult supervision of public transport. There is no current and agreed corporate policy to combat bullying in schools and the wider community, nor clear mechanisms for monitoring or reporting on incidence of bullying, across all services.

37. Information provided by schools, the youth service and the council to children and young people about key risks and how to deal with them is variable. There is a good range of information and initiatives to support road safety. This is contributing to significant reduction in child deaths and serious injuries due to road accidents. However, there is no co-ordinated strategy for ensuring that children and young people are provided with information on access and availability of services and to age-appropriate literature to encourage safe relationships and recognition of risks and harm.

38. Joint working across services is well established for assessment of need and coordination of services to protect children and young people who are most at risk of abuse and for those who need care. The proportion of children on the child protection register is close to the national average and their cases are all allocated to qualified social workers. The proportion of looked after children has remained below the national average but is steadily increasing. Criteria for admission to care are clear and appropriate. New developments in family support and prevention are adding to the repertoire of services available to children and families at points of crisis. A good range of family support services is accessible to children, young people and their families, and is highly valued. Services are geared to enable children to live at home and to increase parenting skills.

39. Joint working between services to ensure that the whereabouts of sex offenders against children are known, are effective in identifying children who may be at risk and for agreeing safeguarding arrangements. However communication processes within the police force need to be strengthened to ensure that local child protection police are systematically informed of the whereabouts of offenders in the community.

40. Thresholds for intervention on child protection concerns are well understood by staff across services and responsiveness of most agencies is timely. Child protection planning and decision-making are effectively coordinated and reviewed. The council has actively promoted a wider safeguarding agenda among partner agencies. There is an increasing understanding of eligibility criteria and models of intervention for children in need and vulnerable children among partner agencies. Incidents of domestic violence are routinely reported and responded to in line with agreed thresholds for intervention. Increasingly, agencies are agreeing multi-agency support packages for vulnerable children in well-attended "children in need" meetings.

41. The central duty and assessment team manages the council's response to all referrals of child concern. The systems and processes in the team ensure that information necessary for decision-making is identified, collected and distributed efficiently to relevant agencies. However, documentation and guidance relating to the contribution of services to assessments and reviews remains unclear. In particular, there is no clear differentiation and some duplication in documentation for completion of initial and core assessments. This is acknowledged by the council and action is proposed to introduce new documentation to support an integrated approach to service delivery. Despite this, the timeliness and quality of initial assessment is improving and varies from adequate to very good. A multi-agency panel reviews cases of children and young people from black and ethnic communities and ensures that appropriate account is taken of needs arising from cultural or ethnic differences.

42. Managers of the duty and assessment team maintain effective control of information, workload and decision making and keep a clear focus on the need

to safeguard children and young people and promote their welfare. Progress of cases is systematically monitored and management of transfers of cases are underpinned by clear protocols across the services. At the time of inspection, all child protection and looked after children were allocated to qualified social workers.

43. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is proposed to be in place by 1 April 2006. Membership, funding and governance arrangements are yet to be finalised. The role of the board has been planned to increase the participation of voluntary and independent agencies and to increase the accountability of all services in ensuring effective safeguarding arrangements. This poses a challenge to services in light of the inadequate funding by partner agencies for the current Area Child Protection Committee and weak processes of quality assurance and performance management. Recent serious case reviews have led to action plans which have not been fully implemented. In particular, joint working with adult services need to be strengthened further.

44. Child protection is afforded high priority across the council and health services. Social work teams are adequately resourced to ensure a timely and effective response to the needs of children and young people for protection. The council has taken effective action to reduce the number of social work vacancies and these are now at a low level. Staff are very positive about the support and supervision provided by managers. However, it has been acknowledged that resources in Trafford and the wider Greater Manchester Police Forces are inadequate. This impacts adversely on timescales for completion of child protection investigations and initial child protection conferences and on police attendance at child protection review conferences.

45. Multi-agency training is structured to reflect levels of safeguarding responsibilities across services. Training is well attended and positively received. Outcomes identified by staff include effective relationships among frontline staff across services.

46. Partnership working with parents is now established across services. The views of children and young people in need are sought and their views contribute to planning and decision-making. Direct involvement of children and young people in statutory reviews for looked after children and child protection conferences and reviews, has improved significantly. This improvement is, however, recent and is yet to reach an acceptable level of performance.

47. Arrangements for establishing the whereabouts of all children and young people are in place and are effective. An ambitious information system is being developed and plans are in place for it to be rolled out across the borough. A joint approach across partner agencies is innovative and is supporting the development of processes to identify missing children and to track the progress of those who are not in school. Access to information across services is maintained safely through clear protocols which are regularly reviewed. There are good working links with the police service to report and locate children and

young people missing from care. There is an established process for reporting the incidence and outcome of these episodes for individual children and young people.

48. A good range of services for disabled children and young people is valued by families and improves the quality of life for both children and their families. Parents and carers were generally positive about the services they received but sometimes found it hard to gain access to some services when they needed them. There is a good mix of services for disabled children and young people and attention is being given to the development of these services as children's centres and other local resources are established. This will lead to a more efficient supply of services and ensure more timely access to specialist facilities as required.

49. The council has made good progress in ensuring that looked after children live in stable placements and close to their community whenever possible. Residential and foster care placements for looked after children provide safe and good personal care. Young people interviewed indicated that they felt safe in their current placements. Services to looked after children are adequate with strong indications of improvement in the past year or so. This has clearly been a priority for the council and partners leading to some effective developments in the health care and education support for looked after children. Further strengthening of leaving care and after care arrangements are needed including the provision of safe and supported accommodation and improved access to training opportunities.

Enjoying and achieving

50. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve is good.** There is a good level of support and guidance for parents and carers in helping their children to enjoy and achieve. Information is available in schools, family centres and the Children's Centre to promote the use of extra-curricular learning opportunities and recreational time. Targeted information for parents and carers whose children have learning difficulties/and or disabilities is limited and should be made more widely available throughout the borough.

51. The provision of early years education and childcare is good. Action is taken by the Early Years Team to ensure that providers are meeting standards and raising the quality of early years settings. Well established multi-agency links are in place in providing early intervention for those children who require additional support. The Children's Centre provides an effective integrated approach for children offering health, care and education. The Children's Centre strategy is on target and has taken account of the need for early years provision to be more evenly distributed and accessible throughout the borough.

52. Standard of attainment and rate of progress for the majority of pupils in Trafford is good and in some cases very good. Attendance in most schools is high and inspection findings indicate that the majority of children and young people have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy school. Schools are well supported by the council in ensuring that educational provision is of good quality. Intervention is well targeted and proportionate to needs. Over the last two years, the School Improvement Service has provided effective support to schools causing concern and overall, pupil progress has improved and is now good in most cases. A secondary school was removed from special measures early as a result of significant improvements. Schools are provided with good quality data and this has been effective in identifying trends over time and enabled the tracking of individual pupil's progress. There is now an increasing emphasis on the need to develop more rigorous procedures relating to the causes of low attainment for more vulnerable groups of pupils, particularly working within the Every Child Matters framework.

53. Support for behaviour in secondary schools is variable and is poor at Key Stage 4. The Behaviour Support Improvement Plan does not identify clear, measurable outcomes. Schools report difficulties in accessing the behaviour support service and some secondary head teachers feel that pupils end up excluded due to the lack of preventive support available. The council recognises this as a weakness and is in the process of making changes to improve this service. Part of its strategy is to build the capacity of schools to be able to provide their own preventive services around attendance, behaviour and support. Education Welfare Officers are now placed in secondary schools and this is having a positive impact in the promotion of joint working between officers, teaching staff, pupils and parents.

54. There are three pupil referral units, one of which is designated as a vulnerable pupil referral unit and incorporates the Home Tuition service. Accommodation is unsuitable to pupils' needs and is of poor quality. The units are not fully resourced and pupils at Key Stage 4 are not consistently receiving their full entitlement to 25 hours of weekly tuition; however, all pupils at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 receive their education entitlement. The percentage of pupils who received alternative education and who gained five or more GCSEs is low, although there is evidence of some innovative practice relating to the teaching of satellite groups of young pupils, a small number of whom gained GCSEs last year. The numbers of excluded pupils re-integrated into mainstream education is low. The management information system is being developed to ensure that there is consistent and effective monitoring of attendance and attainment. The provision for alternative education remains an area for further improvement.

55. The educational provision for looked after children is adequate. This has been a priority area for the council and evidence that the strategic action plan to ensure that looked after children participate in education and achieve to their potential is having good effect. Nevertheless, it was reported that although schools are aware of this vulnerable group, they are not always aware of the priority given strategically to this vulnerable group or the agreed action plans.

Appropriate steps are being taken to ensure that looked after children are not excluded and are given priority by schools when determining their admission arrangements. A newly-appointed learning mentor for looked after children offers good support to children and professionals, and all schools have a designated teacher in place to support children and young people's needs. The council uses the National Teaching Advisory Service for additional support if required, and this has had a positive impact on some pupil's progress. Although most looked after children are receiving good mainstream education in Trafford, a small number are currently not receiving their full educational entitlement. The quality of Personal Education Plans is variable and more attention is required to improve their consistency across the borough.

56. Provision in schools for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and meets their needs. Recent inspection findings in primary and secondary schools judged the achievement of pupils with statements of special educational need (SEN) as good or very good. Whilst timescales for the completion of SEN statements remain very low, there has been a considerable improvement and progress in this area continues to be made. Extensive consultation has taken place on the delegation of SEN funding to schools, who are mostly positive about the proposed changes. Some head teachers reported they were unclear about the delegation of SEN funding, although they confirmed they had been consulted.

57. Children and young people can access a good range of voluntary learning and recreational activities. Schools promote actively a broad range of extra-curricular activities and standards of young people's achievements are particularly high in school-based activities. The council works well with schools in promoting healthy living and sports, and there are good links with primary and secondary schools to access sports and leisure facilities in and outside of school hours.

Making a positive contribution

58. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is adequate.** A wide range of services, particularly schools and the youth service, enable children and young people to develop socially and emotionally. Young children benefit from a range of play initiatives to help them develop positive relationships. Parents value these initiatives and the range of parenting programmes that are made available. Schools and the youth service provide good opportunities for young people to take responsibility, establish positive relationships and to value diversity. During Local Democracy Week, young people contributed via the local website to the consultation on the Youth Matters Green Paper. Many young people, including the most vulnerable, are engaged in accredited programmes of personal development such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Millennium Volunteers and the Youth Achievement Awards. The local authority's support for and development of citizenship is valued by schools where over half have

achieved accreditation in the personal and social development (PSD) framework developed by partners within the region.

59. In general, children and young people receive good support in managing change and in coping with difficult periods in their lives. For example, effective support is provided by youth workers and Connexions personal advisers to vulnerable young people aged 14 and over, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by three specialist personal advisers. Access to advice and guidance on a range of health, social and educational matters is good at the Sale Talk Shop for young people. Young carers are supported very effectively through the work of the Trafford Young Carers' Partnership addressing the needs of the family as a whole, as well as the needs of individual young carers. Young carers have actively participated in the development of the service they receive. For example, a Young Carer Identification Card project was initiated by young people to provide discrete recognition of their role and responsibilities in their dealings with schools, general practitioners and pharmacies.

60. The council and partners take the views of children and young people seriously; the partnership has made significant progress in implementing its participation strategy and is committed to involving children and young people in the decisions made about their local communities and the services designed to meet their needs. A wide range of opportunities exist for children and young people to make a positive contribution and they are consulted through a range of formal and informal mechanisms; these include: school and youth councils; service user groups, such as those for children looked after by the council; and through direct involvement in projects designed to improve services, such as the 16-19 transport project on access to training and further education provision for young people with disabilities. All primary and secondary schools have an active school council. Young people in secondary schools and other youth groups also have an opportunity to elect representatives to the Youth Cabinet and a new online voting system for this year's Youth Parliament has been introduced. Members of the Youth Cabinet sit on the Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) Board and on the participation steering group. They have been involved in the appointment of senior officers and contribute their views as a means of informing developments within services for children and young people.

61. Work to reduce anti-social behaviour is adequate. Statutory and voluntary organisations are working together more effectively, supported by the Safer Trafford Young Persons Group, which has recently been established to co-ordinate action and to oversee enforcement activity in relation to children and young people at risk of offending, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse. Within schools, inspection outcomes indicate that pupil behaviour is generally good but there is no overall anti-bullying strategy within the authority despite some good individual initiatives. The local authority has provided good support to schools on the development of race equality standards over a number of years and the monitoring of racial incidents and harassment is well established.

However, the race equality scheme within CYPS is in the early stages of development and the need to develop a more coherent equality strategy is recognised as a key priority within the Children and Young People's Plan.

62. Increasingly effective systems are identifying young people at risk of offending through the work of the Youth Offending Team (YOT) and other agencies. A significant number of children and young people have been targeted through successful initiatives such as Positive Activities for Young People, many of whom were engaged with the YOT and the Youth Inclusion Support Project. However, an increasing number of looked after young people have received final warnings and convictions. A prevention project has been established to provide street-based youth work at weekends in three targeted hotspots within the borough. Safer area partnerships in four areas of the borough have been effective in co-ordinating multi-agency work with the police to provide diversionary activities for young people and to build safer local communities.

63. Specialist staff within the YOT are providing adequate levels of support to children, young people, parents and carers. Opportunities in relation to Entry to Employment for pre- and post-16 young people supervised by the YOT are limited. Progress has been made over the last two years but the most recent figures show a dip from 82% to 77% of young offenders who are in education, employment or training. Although an education sub group of the YOT is beginning to address these issues, further co-ordinated work is required to ensure that provision is available to match the needs of excluded pupils. Opportunities for children and young people to participate in direct or indirect reparation with victims of crime are limited.

64. Through the effective work of the Children's Rights Service, children and young people in care are consulted about policies and strategies that affect them and have contributed directly to specific policy developments such as bullying, accommodation and strategies to raise the attainment of looked after children. A group of young people in care have worked together with an artist to design a welcome pack for young people coming into the care system. Young people are generally positive about their care and appropriate systems are in place to ensure that any serious concerns raised by them are referred to and dealt with by senior social care managers. In this respect, the Children's Rights Service provides good support. The recent appointment of a care leaver as a participation officer is intended to further develop the positive contribution of children and young people in care.

65. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have opportunities to express their views within the formal review process and at transition reviews but practice is variable, particularly for those with disabilities. In a small number of cases, parents reported that their contributions are not valued. The local authority is committed to widening the participation of children with disabilities and staff training to enhance communications skills is planned. There is a range of initiatives and projects to promote greater inclusion and participation

including a website for children with disabilities, more accessible complaints procedures using different media and an innovative participation project in a special school involving photography. Within the youth service, Davyhulme youth centre runs a successfully integrated programme for young people with disabilities and is identified as the basis for further borough-wide developments.

66. The local authority's self-assessment for this aspect of the joint area review accurately identifies the priorities for further development, but, in terms of the impact of services for the most vulnerable groups, it is too generous.

Achieving economic well-being

67. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well being is good.** The local authority has implemented a good range of regeneration initiatives in disadvantaged areas. These include the development of Children's Centres, the creation of joint teams, and the engagement of the voluntary sector in the delivery of services. The distribution of information about benefits and childcare has been thoughtfully planned, and there are good plans to widen the accessibility of information about sports activities. There is an adequate supply of childcare places, although some families find them out of financial reach. Financial support for learners is well managed in schools and colleges. Benefits for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are promoted well and there is an increasing, but low, number of families who receive direct payments. In Partington, the range of leisure activities has improved significantly, however, public transport deficiencies in some parts of the borough present a significant barrier to participation in learning and employment.

68. Effective action has been taken by the Connexions service and its partners to reduce the proportion of young people who are not in education, training or employment. Most young people benefit from well-managed work experience and schools meet the basic requirements for the work-related learning curriculum. The range of vocational options at Key Stage 4 is increasing in many, but not all, schools. Most young people are well supported by Connexions personal advisers. There is good joint working between social services, Connexions and other agencies in supporting the transition of young people who are looked after and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All young people who are looked after have pathway plans but some do not attend their reviews. Progression rates to further education and training for looked after children have improved, but remain comparatively low. An increasing proportion of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities participate in learning after year 11. Information about opportunities at transition at age 19 for this group does not always accord with the needs and wishes of parents and carers. A few schools do not give sufficient access to colleges and training providers to provide information on post-16 learning opportunities. Although all young people receive information from Connexions

about post-16 options the promotion of the work-based learning route remains insufficient in a few schools.

69. Key partners have a strong commitment to collaborative working, which is well promoted within Trafford's 14-19 strategy. Local authority officers have worked well with Connexions and local LSC managers to develop the strategy and have provided good support for schools wishing to develop their vocational provision. The structures for managing the 14-19 strategy are appropriate. Quality assurance arrangements for collaborative provision have recently been developed and are adequate. Strategic planning of post-16 provision is an area for further development: the strategic area review is incomplete and post-16 collaboration has been insufficient to ensure that the needs of all young people in vulnerable groups are fully addressed. There is some duplication of GCE AS and A2 provision and the planning of work-based learning is insufficiently developed. In some cases there is not sufficient transfer of information about young people to enable their effective transition to further education at 16.

70. The standard of teaching and learning is good in many providers. Success rates in school sixth forms and at level 1 and 2 at South Trafford College are high as are success rates on level 3 vocational provision. The proportion of young people in Trafford at the age of 19 who are qualified to level 2 is above the national average. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support in colleges and achieve well at level 1. Progression rates for E2E are satisfactory. Success rates for apprenticeships are improving but low. Achievement of black and minority ethnic young people in Trafford at South Trafford College and in sixth forms is improving and is at least satisfactory. Overall, young people in sixth forms make the progress expected based on their GCSE results. Previous inspections showed that too many work-based learning providers were judged to be inadequate; however on re-inspection, the picture had improved with most judged to be satisfactory.

71. There is a good range of level 3 provision for most young people aged 16-18. The colleges offer a broad range of qualifications from entry level. Good collaboration between the colleges and some schools is broadening the provision at Key Stage 4. Schools have been successful in achieving specialist status and both colleges have well-established centres of vocational excellence. Participation in advanced apprenticeships is low and work-based learning is often seen as a route for the less able. There is some uncertainty about the continuation of vocational courses when short-term funding comes to an end. Gaps in post-16 provision include minority subjects at level 3 for those unable to meet the entry requirements of school sixth forms, and provision for the most vulnerable, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The council is committed to providing computers and training to all looked after children and young people but some in residential care had poor internet access.

72. A range of appropriate actions to address housing needs have been taken but these have not yet adequately addressed the needs of all young people. The local authority has reduced its proportion of unfit private dwellings and, through the transfer of its housing stock to a trust, has released funds which are being used to address housing issues. There are no families accommodated in bed and breakfast and young parents have access to good accommodation. There is currently insufficient supportive accommodation for some young people aged 16 and 17 and those leaving care, and there are too many instances of the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for them. Access to social housing and affordable homes across the borough is insufficient.

Service management

73. **The management of services for children and young people in Trafford is good overall.** The position of the council and its partners in relation to ambition is adequate. Political commitment within the council to improve services for children and young people is strong. The recently revised Community Strategy, re-launched in January 2006, includes clear and challenging ambitions for children and young people based on needs analysis, consultation with local people and an awareness of where performance needs to improve. A vision is in place as part of the draft CYPP, but this does not represent a clear and inspiring statement of what the council and partners want to achieve. Key stakeholders have been involved in aspects of the work to date on updating the community strategy, the vision and the CYPP. However, there are still a number of key areas for further improvement and more work is required to consolidate the partnership and to fully implement the shared vision for children's services in the borough.

74. Prioritisation is adequate. The CYPP outlines 12 areas of work that are seen as priorities. They are based on an analysis of need and reflect key national and local issues for children and young people. They include reference to equality and diversity issues and reflect shared priorities in key areas such as looked after children, child protection, attainment and healthy living. They also represent a focus on areas that need further improvement such as provision for children out of school, CAMHS and children with disabilities.

75. The draft CYPP, the mechanism to deliver these priorities, is currently subject to consultation and the service recognises there is more to do before it represents a robust strategy for further improvement. The plan is not clear about the roles and responsibilities of partners or the contribution that will be expected of them. Work on the identification of the resources required for implementation is at an early stage and links to the medium term financial strategy are limited.

76. The overall record of the council and partners in achieving priorities is adequate with a number of strong examples of good performance. A number of important priorities for further work exist including the education of vulnerable children and young who are out of school, continued strengthening of social

care services and further developments in the 14 –19 strategy. The CYP strategic partnership has demonstrated an ability to remain focussed on problems in order to effect improvement, for example in financial management, SEN and transport. Other examples of positive achievement by partners are the improvements in important aspects of children's health, tightening of child protection systems, reducing the use of out of borough placements and diverting resources to prevention. A draft local preventative strategy is now in place.

77. The capacity of the council and its partners to deliver better outcomes for children and young people is good. Although the work of some partner agencies is stronger on the ground than it is strategically, there is a productive history of joint working in Trafford. This has resulted in a range of jointly provided and effective projects that have led to improved outcomes. The work of agencies to tackle domestic violence across Trafford has led to improved reporting and support for children, young people and their families. The council and partners have a good awareness of progress being made and those areas where further work is needed.

78. The council meets government spending targets for both education and children's social services. There has been a successful approach to achieve a significant reduction in overspending on out of Borough placements. Budgets have also been brought under control in other areas, such as school transport, and resources are well managed through a systematic approach to reporting and tackling potential problems.

79. The capacity for further improvement is also good. Significant increases in funding to children's social care have improved capacity and outcomes. The service is building a record of improvement and where they have remained focussed there is evidence of improvement and sustainability. The council responds well to external inspection and builds this learning into service improvement. Social workers are engaged in and committed to the improvement journey. The Children and Young People's Service (CYPS) has been successful in its work to recruit and retain staff, particularly children's social workers. The qualification levels of residential and social care staff are good and there is a programme for the continuing professional development of teachers and also a toolkit for those who work in health.

80. The children and young people's service limited company board is on target to achieve the dissolution of the current limited company by the end of August 2006 and plans for the new strategic partnership are underway. The post of director of children's services has been in place since April 2002 and a lead member for children's services is in place. Both have clear job descriptions. The director and senior managers provide strong leadership and awareness of key local and national issues. Political leadership of children's services is knowledgeable, committed to improving local services and has made a positive impact on budgetary issues and relationships with schools. However, structured

training and preparation for lead members and deputy lead members could be strengthened.

81. Work is underway on a joint commissioning strategy, but is at an early stage. There has been limited pooling of budgets under the limited company, but this priority remains under-developed. The service and partners make some use of benchmarking to measure performance against others, particularly within education, health and children's social care.

82. Services for children and young people in Trafford represent good value for money. Costs are low and the quality of services is at least adequate and often good. For example, high performance in overall education attainment is achieved against a background of spending on school improvement which is only 40% of the national average. The youth service demonstrates adequate value for money. Performance information and financial information are reported to the executive, but there is limited consideration of cost and outcomes together, as part of an ongoing and robust approach to measuring value for money.

83. Arrangements for the management of performance by the council are good. Regular reporting to service managers helps to identify areas for further improvement and this approach has had good impact across the borough. The timeliness of SEN statements has been tackled through a rigorous approach to monitoring targets and outcomes. This, together with additional resources and outsourcing of some tasks has led to a marked improvement in services and ensured that Trafford is moving to exceed national performances averages. Similar progress is being made in the delivery of youth offending services although further work is needed to reduce offending amongst the most vulnerable and hard to reach groups.

84. The service has responded to criticisms of its approach to case file management by producing a new model of auditing children's social care files. This new approach has many strengths and is part of a wider quality assurance framework, involving, planning, governance visits (regulation 33 and management visits), governance meetings and individual performance appraisal. It is an exemplary piece of improvement work that has resulted in better outcomes for a vulnerable group of children and young people. The Local Strategic Partnership has a framework in place and a culture of performance management is emerging. The new partnership arrangements will be based on the council's corporate performance management framework within which the CYPS works to good effect. The Brophy Report produced in April 2005, outlines this multi-agency management framework, which is being developed.

85. The involvement of children, young people, parents and carers in the management of performance and improvement of services remains under developed and good opportunities now exist to ensure that all services at all stages are underpinned by positive user and carer involvement. It is best

exemplified in some aspects of the work with looked after children and young carers. Young people are able to express themselves through the good work undertaken in school councils, the youth parliament, a youth cabinet and the young person sitting on the board of the limited company; but the impact of this on refocusing services to make them more sensitive to user needs and wishes is inconsistent. The lead member for children's services is energetic in monitoring performance and demonstrates a wide and detailed knowledge of his service area. Further work is required to ensure that the wider scrutiny functions of the council are fully responsive to improved user and carer feedback and are sufficiently adapted to give them a stronger voice.

86. The self-assessment for the joint area review is a largely accurate reflection of current service management in Trafford. It reinforces the considerable commitment of the council to change and the emerging momentum of the partnership as a whole. Important steps are being taken in Trafford to integrate services and there are many examples of good progress in the delivery of joint services. There is now a real opportunity in the borough to ensure that all services to children and young people are consistently provided including to the most vulnerable groups.

Annex: The children and young people's section of the corporate assessment report

1. For the majority of children and young people in Trafford, services are good. There are high educational attainment rates for most children and young people and there is access to a wide range of high quality education provision. Considerable progress is being made to harmonise working arrangements between key agencies to ensure that services are provided in integrated ways across the whole borough. The children and young people's service is making effective progress in building structures to deliver good quality services to all children and young people in the borough. The partnership is setting clear priorities for action and there is good evidence of progress in most areas of service. Examples of improved joint working have been the strengthening of child protection arrangements since a previous inspection of social care services and joint working to create a network of children's centres in the borough.

2. The Partnership Board is fully aware of identified gaps in some areas of service affecting a minority of the most vulnerable children and young people. However, the capacity of the council and partners to improve identified services is good with strong political and managerial support for continued improvement in these areas. There is a strong record of improvement over the past year or so and the trajectory of progress is in the right direction. The Partnership Board is taking a whole systems approach both to planning and building capacity. There are good examples of services being provided at lower comparative cost but with improved outcomes for some children and young people.

3. The council is acting as an effective driver to continuous improvement of children's services. It is working well with key partners, particularly the two primary care trusts. The strong base for partnership working could now be usefully extended including the engagement of the police in planning and improving some aspects of safeguarding services, and in improving housing arrangements for some vulnerable younger people. There is also scope to sharpen arrangements for joint service commissioning and joint performance management. There are some very good examples of joint local working, including the establishment of eight Children's Centres across the borough. One such centre is already fully operational in Partington and an extended school project and children's centre will shortly be opened in Old Trafford.

4. Services to looked after children, with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are adequate and improving. But some aspects of housing are inadequate, which means there is insufficient suitable and safe housing for some young people leaving care. The facilities and accommodation for some groups of vulnerable children and young people are inadequate. The council has substantially improved arrangements for performance management and case auditing in social care and education which is now exemplary and has resulted in children being safer.

5. The council shows strong political and managerial commitment to improving children's services. Agreed strategies and action plans to deliver services are joined up. But the understanding of *Every Child Matters* among all partners and practitioners is mixed. The council and its partners are working well together to give children and young people a greater voice in the planning of services. The Youth Cabinet is doing an excellent job and councillors are performing their corporate parenting responsibilities well. As a fast developing area, both economically and demographically, Trafford has opportunities to build strong children's services with imaginative vision. The consolidation of the work of the Partnership Board with agreed joint priorities, resources and action supports progress to achieve improved outcomes for all children and young people in more consistent ways, including those who are susceptible to social isolation and exclusion.