

Joint area review

Southampton Children's Services Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

Audit Commission
Healthcare Commission
HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
HM Inspectorate of Prisons
HM Inspectorate of Probation
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Introduction

1. The 2006 annual performance assessment for Southampton City Council judged the council's children's services as good and its capacity to improve as good.
2. This report assesses the contribution of local services in ensuring the following for children and young people:
 - effective care for those at risk or requiring safeguarding
 - the best possible outcomes for those who are looked after
 - the best possible outcomes for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
3. The most recent annual performance assessment for Southampton City Council judged the council's children's services as good and its capacity to improve as good. This assessment and other sources of evidence led to the following additional areas being investigated:
 - the contribution of local services to support and challenge schools in raising attainment
 - the impact of local services in reducing the number of young people not in employment, education and training.

Context

4. Southampton has a population of approximately 222,000 residents. Southampton City Council is ranked the 96th most deprived out of the 354 local authorities in England in the 2004 index of multiple deprivation. Some 39% of pupils live in areas which are among the 20% most deprived areas for child poverty in the country. The city has designated 11 areas as priority neighbourhoods. The most significant employment sectors in Southampton are distribution, tourism, business and finance and related activities. The port makes a significant contribution to the economy of the area. At 2.4% the unemployment rate is higher than the average for the south east but below the national average. The majority of the population is White British, with 7.63% from non-white minority ethnic groups. In Southampton schools however the minority ethnic proportion was 21% in 2007 with children and young people speaking over 70 different languages. There has been significant growth in the population of eastern European nationals over the last three years, which numbers around 12,000 people.
5. Pre-16 education provision comprises:

- 463 private or voluntary early years settings and five children's centres (with a further four designated to provide the same services)
 - 62 first schools (one nursery, 21 infant, 16 junior, 24 primary)
 - 14 secondary schools (three boys schools, three girls schools and eight mixed schools)
 - five special schools
 - two pupil referral units.
6. Post-16 education and training is provided by:
- one sixth form
 - one general further education college
 - two sixth form colleges
 - eight main work-based training providers.
7. Two providers have contracts for Education to Employment (E2E) training.
8. Adult and community learning, including family learning, is provided by Southampton City Council.
9. Primary care is provided by Southampton City Primary Care Trust (PCT), which is coterminous with the Southampton City Council area.
10. Acute hospital services are provided by Southampton University Hospital Trust.
11. Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) is multi agency service and the tier 3 Behaviour Resource Service is managed through Southampton City Council.
12. Children's social care services are provided through:
- 170 foster carers
 - three children's residential homes
 - three family centres
 - seven field social work/support teams (two supporting children teams, a referral and assessment team, a children with disabilities team and an out-of-hours team).

Main findings

13. The main findings of this joint area review are as follows:
- the arrangements for safeguarding children and young people are adequate. Priorities have been identified by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board but the actions taken have still to impact on outcomes for children and young people. For some children and families in need of social care support intervention is not always timely and underpinned by comprehensive assessment of need.

Effective partnerships between agencies to promote the wider safeguarding agenda are developing well

- services make an adequate contribution to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people. Most of these children receive good personal care and support but many children in long term care do not have permanent plans. Although educational outcomes are improving too many school days are lost due to absence or exclusion
- services make a good contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Interagency working across health, education and social care are strong but there is insufficient access to speech and language therapy services. Transition planning is well managed overall but planning for transition to post-16 education or training is more variable due to limited education and training opportunities
- the support and challenge provided to schools are good and many children and young people make good progress from a low base. Data are used well to inform strategy and link advisers present strong challenge to schools. There have been significant improvements in the Education Welfare Service which are having a positive impact on attendance
- the impact of local services in reducing the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training is adequate. Different projects and initiatives are having a positive impact on the numbers of young people who are not in employment, education or training. Curriculum opportunities for 14–19 year olds have improved through partnership working between schools and colleges but there is insufficient coordination of actions to broaden opportunities for those who are not in employment, education or training
- service management is good and senior managers provide clear leadership. The capacity to improve further is also good. Partnership working is strong and is having a positive impact on services and outcomes.

Grades

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

	Local services overall
Safeguarding	2
Looked after children	2
Learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Service management	3
Capacity to improve	3

Recommendations

For immediate action

- The local partnership should ensure that an appropriate way is found to successfully disseminate the findings of this report to children and young people in the area.
- The council should strengthen the promotion of the independent visiting scheme for looked after children.

For action over the next six months

- The council should review and strengthen social care quality assurance procedures, management overview of cases and the timeliness of intervention.
- The council should ensure all children who require them are provided with permanence plans.
- The council, Local Learning and Skills Council and Connexions should ensure all young people and particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, have timely access to resources and information for effective transition to post-16 education and training.
- The council should develop a clear framework identifying where schools can get help to improve their practice, both within and beyond Southampton, in all areas of need.
- The council and its partners should ensure that the development of 14-19 education and training is co-ordinated effectively across

schools, colleges and work-based learning providers together with appropriate, targeted support to ensure the needs of young people who are not in education, training or employment or are at risk of being so, are met.

- The partnership should ensure the vigorous promotion of the anti-bullying strategy.
- The partnership should increase opportunities for children and young people from the more deprived communities to participate in service planning.
- The partnership should strengthen scrutiny and the consistency of the impact of performance management.

For action in the longer term

- The partnership should improve access to appropriate housing and accommodation for young people, in particular those from vulnerable groups.
- The council, Local Learning and Skills Council and Connexions should increase the engagement of employers in providing training and employment opportunities for young people.

Equality and diversity

14. Services and partners identify and prioritise the needs of diverse groups well and services are targeted well to the most deprived areas of the city. The Sure Start programme has successfully reached out to children, parents and carers from Black and minority ethnic communities. Educational attainment of pupils from Black and minority ethnic groups is broadly in line with the national average, although some groups do not progress as well as their peers at certain key points. Processes for monitoring outcomes for Black and minority ethnic communities are in place but do not always lead to improvements. Sufficient use is not currently being made by the council and its partners of data collected about racist incidences in schools. The council has achieved level 3 of the Equality Standard and has worked effectively with a diverse range of groups, including Travellers and speakers of English as an additional language. The youth service engages vulnerable groups within different communities well.

Safeguarding

Inadequate



Adequate



Good



Outstanding



15. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children at risk or requiring safeguarding is adequate.** Most children and young people feel safe in their homes, schools and in their local community. Priorities for improving services to keep children and young people safe are clear and services are improving through increased multi-agency arrangements. It is too early, however, to judge the full impact of some collaborative arrangements and initiatives.

16. Partnerships between agencies provide a good range of information, education and support services for children and families to promote the wider aspects of safeguarding. The number of children under 16 killed or seriously injured on roads has reduced by 30% as a result of specific and targeted work, although the rate of reduction is slower than the national average of 48%. Most children report that they feel very safe or quite safe in school and in their local community.

17. Thresholds within the council's eligibility criteria for the provision of children's social care services are clear and widely publicised but not fully understood by all referring agencies. Feedback to those who make referrals is not always consistent. Information sharing protocols are in place but not all agencies are fully conversant with them. Social care duty arrangements are adequately managed and provide an accessible out-of-hours service to families in need.

18. Referrals are responded to promptly, and there are clear procedures in place for accurate recording of contacts and referrals. During 2006-07, the number of referrals fell by 20%. Of those referred, initial assessments were carried out on 68% which is significantly higher than the average for similar councils. Whilst the numbers of referrals fell and a higher proportion led to an initial assessment, only 51% were completed within timescales resulting in some delays in provision of services. In comparison to similar councils, 25% fewer child protection assessments and 22% fewer initial child protection conferences were carried out during the 12 months prior to the inspection. The number of children on the child protection register has remained stable and is balanced by the number of registrations and de-registrations throughout the year. Re-registrations have shown a significant fall from 18% to 9%, suggesting effective interagency arrangements are in place to support children once they have become de-registered. All children on the child protection register are allocated to a qualified social worker and are reviewed on time.

19. The number of core assessments undertaken has increased significantly but performance remains significantly below that of similar councils. Effective and well coordinated preventative work is in place with partner agencies to support many children and families including community safety initiatives, Sure Start services, the STAR project and 'No Limits' support. However, for some children and families in need of social care support, intervention is not always underpinned by timely and comprehensive assessment of needs. Delayed intervention in such cases results in an escalation in the level of children's

needs and need for protection. Most assessments are of a good quality but some lack depth and analysis and are not always well recorded. Case records do not always reflect the views and wishes of children and young people.

20. Quality assurance of case records, decision making and care planning ranges from adequate to good and procedures are not applied consistently across all fieldwork teams. There is a lack of rigor in the auditing of case files and in the systematic recording and tracking of decision making within case files. Further, where quality assurance procedures are effective, outcomes are not always used to inform service-wide improvements. Performance management of individual members of staff is satisfactory and effective action is taken to support those who are not performing well or who wish to develop their careers. Most practitioners receive regular supervision and have access to a range of training opportunities, including mandatory multi-agency child protection training.

21. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) has appropriate membership and is providing clear leadership and oversight of its core business. It has correctly identified priorities and actions to bring about improvement. These are however at an early stage of implementation and have yet to impact fully on outcomes for children and young people. Action has been taken to improve practice relating to the commissioning of serious case reviews.

22. Young carers' groups provide good quality and much valued support, which contrasts starkly with the bullying experienced by some young carers at school. Where schools have a young carers' group within the school, these children have good pastoral support and are less likely to be subjected to bullying. A third of children report having been bullied at school. The council is implementing a range of measures to address the problem and has developed an overarching anti-bullying strategy which is beginning to have an impact. Reporting and monitoring of racist incidents within schools have improved considerably but the council does not currently use information to evaluate the impact of strategies. Procedures to remedy this were being developed at the time of the inspection.

23. There has been slow progress in raising public awareness of private fostering and in identifying children within the city who are privately fostered. Plans are in place to address this issue. Once a child is identified as being privately fostered social care services respond appropriately.

24. Effective programmes provided through the Sure Start services are reducing the incidence of child abuse and neglect. Agencies work well together to promote healthy lifestyles, and engagement of schools in the Healthy Schools programme is high. The fall in teenage conception rates and Chlamydia infections have not been maintained however.

25. Multi-agency responses to domestic violence are good and there is a clear system of notifications between the police and children's services. Youth offending services, substance misuse services and community safety

partnerships are working together well to provide children and families with a range of targeted information and support. There are some good initiatives to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as use of behaviour contracts linked to neighbourhood reparation. Detailed multi-agency project planning is in place to implement the Common Assessment Framework, but training and implementation is at an early stage.

26. Arrangements between agencies for tracking children missing from care and education are good. Multi-agency public protection arrangements are established and contribute well to the safeguarding of children from adults who pose a risk to them. The management of allegations against professionals suspected of abusing children is good, with effective monitoring of investigations by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. Practices for safe recruitment of staff are good.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Increasing effectiveness of multi-agency work to provide preventative services, early intervention and support to children and families through a variety of settings.</p> <p>Tracking of children missing from care and education.</p> <p>Leadership and oversight provided by the LSCB.</p> <p>Support to young carers' groups.</p> <p>Safe recruitment practices.</p>	<p>Low rates of completion of initial assessments within 7 working days.</p> <p>Lack of timeliness of some comprehensive assessments of need.</p> <p>Inconsistent quality assurance of case records.</p> <p>Insufficient use of performance management to inform service-wide improvements.</p> <p>Insufficient action to raise public awareness of private fostering.</p>

Looked after children and young people



27. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people is adequate.** Children and young people receive good personal care, have their health needs met well and are prepared well for independent living. However, security in placement and good education outcomes are not achieved consistently. There is poor compliance with planning requirements for permanence in care. Children and young people who contributed to the review are positive about their current placements but most had experienced frequent changes of social worker and several changes of placement. Education attainment levels are satisfactory and improving, but

looked after children and young people in Southampton are more likely to be absent from school than in comparable areas. There are good opportunities for children and young people to participate in a wide range of both individual and group leisure activities and pastimes.

28. Priorities for improving outcomes for looked after children are consistent with the Children and Young People's Plan. Progress against two key areas for improvement identified by the 2006 annual performance assessment is mixed. During 2006–07, offending rates fell significantly from 14.9% to 8.4% compared to 11% for similar areas. However, performance on timeliness of statutory reviews, whilst improving from 59% to 80%, remains significantly below the 92% rate for comparable areas. The corporate parenting group has raised the profile of looked after children but has yet to fully develop its function of challenge. Processes for reporting on outcomes are in place but do not always lead to improvements. Children and young people inform service developments through good consultation projects but have few opportunities to meet with elected members and senior managers.

29. The number of children and young people who are looked after by the council is low. Although admissions into care are controlled tightly by clear thresholds and appropriate decision making pathways, high thresholds for referral to social care often result in intervention by social workers only when families are in crisis. Good services, including the Community Childminders Project and the family conference service effectively prevent family breakdown. However, planning of support for individual children is not always informed by timely multi-agency assessments of needs or analysis of parenting capacity.

30. Care provision is managed well. Placement needs are understood and recruitment and retention strategies are effective in maintaining a wide range of carers. Demand for additional agency placements has reduced significantly and nearly all children and young people are placed within the area. Placement choice is increasing but limited for sibling groups and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Compliance with national minimum standards in residential, adoption and fostering services is good. Assessments of carers are comprehensive. A high proportion of carers are qualified to NVQ Level 3. Foster carers have access to good support and advice on a 24 hour basis.

31. Services to promote good health among children in care are good. Assessments are timely and sensitively managed. All initial assessments have medical input, and responses to identified needs are timely. Carers and young people value the support and information provided. Very good multi-agency support is provided to young people and carers in the Intensive Treatment programme. Looked after children and young people have clear access routes to child and adolescent mental health services. However, waiting times for treatment vary. Responses to high-level concerns such as self-harm or placement breakdown are prompt; whereas delays in provision of therapy to address lower-level concerns impact adversely on the quality of family life for some children and carers.

32. Children and young people in care are effectively safeguarded in their placements. The quality of care plans is improving although some plans lack contingency arrangements and most pay insufficient attention to achieving permanent arrangements. The council acknowledges that delays in completing permanency plans have resulted in very few plans for long-term care being formally ratified. However, plans for adoption of young children are managed well. Performance on short-term placement stability is good. All looked after children and young people are allocated to a qualified social worker. However, young people who have no contact with their families, 25 at the time of the review, access to an independent visitor is not effectively promoted.

33. The impact of agencies on improving education outcomes for looked after children and young people is mixed. Some good nurturing and mentoring schemes, together with increased training for carers, are helping to improve educational attainment. More young people attain at least one GCSE and a higher proportion achieves five good GCSEs than in comparable areas. However, the proportion of looked after children and young people who missed more than 25 days school is high at 13%. Although no looked after child was permanently excluded from school during the year prior to the inspection, looked after children and young people are more likely to be excluded for a fixed term than other children and young people in the area.

34. Looked after children and young people have access to good support services, including independent advocacy and respite care. Two services, Dreamwall, providing respite through organised activities, and St Mary's Study Support Unit, which increases engagement in education through football, are outstanding. They raise the self-esteem of children and young people and increase the stability of family and school placements. Looked after children and young people receive regular information on children's rights. Opportunities for participation in service planning are increasing, but take-up by children in family placements is low and not all activities are accessible to those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nearly all children and young people participate in statutory reviews and an increasing number feel listened to.

35. Multi-agency work to reduce offending behaviour is good. A successful restorative justice programme has improved management of challenging behaviours in children's homes and has reduced the number of cautions and convictions for looked after young people.

36. Services to support young people leaving care are good. The pathways team is highly regarded by young people and carers. All care leavers have a personal advisor and most have a current pathway plan. A high proportion are effectively engaged in education, employment and training. Increased provision of supported lodgings has improved accommodation options. However, long-term independent living options are limited. A good transition planning system to adult services is in place, but delays in finalising funding arrangements increase uncertainty about their future care arrangements for some young people.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Quality of adoption, fostering, residential services and leaving care services.</p> <p>Provision of a wide range of placements within the area.</p> <p>Wide range of good multi-agency services to support looked after children and young people.</p> <p>Multi-agency arrangements to promote good health outcomes.</p> <p>Reduction in offending rates through restorative justice programme.</p> <p>Services to support young people leaving care</p>	<p>The extent to which the corporate parenting group challenges performance.</p> <p>Permanence planning for children in long-term care.</p> <p>Inconsistent quality of assessments of needs.</p> <p>Lack of awareness of the independent visitor scheme.</p> <p>School days lost due to absence or exclusion.</p> <p>Low uptake of participation activities by children and young people.</p>

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Inadequate
Adequate
Good
Outstanding

37. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.** Interagency working across health, education and social care are strong and partners are committed to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Information about services is widely available and voluntary organisations assist parents well to access the support they need. The council and PCT are taking appropriate action to provide more speech and language therapy support. Transition arrangements are good overall but transition to post-16 education and training are more variable due to limited education and training opportunities.

38. Joint appointments between the council and health services, together with the co-location of health, education and social care staff, have created strong interagency working. Multi-disciplinary teams work together well and are having a positive impact on services. Early assessment and intervention services are effective in identifying needs, particularly in the area of communication and speech development. Children and young people receive a single, holistic assessment of their needs through the innovative ‘Jigsaw’ service. Sure Start

centres are contributing well to preventing delays in the development of children.

39. Health screening and health promotion for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good and progress has been made to improve access to health screening in the community. Health clinics are conveniently arranged at special schools to minimise disruption to teaching. Sexual health is promoted well.

40. The council and PCT have recognised that, despite early identification of needs, children have insufficient access to speech and language therapy services, and are taking appropriate action including recruitment of additional staff. A team of qualified speech and language assistants has been established to support schools and early years settings. Further support groups have been piloted and will provide services through children's centres. A carefully prepared booklet and DVD in seven languages helps parents and staff support children's speech and language development.

41. The integrated equipment service is working well towards reducing waiting times and good use is made of a pooled budget to purchase equipment. Success has been achieved in discharging some children with orthopaedic problems from hospital early. At the time of the inspection, there were no outstanding applications for a disabled facilities grant for any child with a disability.

42. Child and adolescent mental health services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are comprehensive with good partnership working between agencies to meet all levels of need. The 'Saucepans' community service provides an effective single point of contact, processes referrals within three weeks of receipt and provides support for children, young people and their families waiting for specialist services. Waiting times for accessing tier 3 services are variable and are sometimes too long.¹

43. Good progress has been made in promoting the inclusion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and levels of statutory assessments are low. Pupils' needs are assessed promptly and good quality statements of special educational need are produced within statutory timescales. Parental recourse to special educational needs tribunals is rare. Most children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are accommodated well within mainstream schools and early years settings. Effective specialist support services work well with schools to build their capacity in supporting pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The city's portage service supports parents and families well.

¹ Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) deliver services to a national 4-tier framework. Most children and young people experiencing mental health problems will be seen at tier 1. This level of service is provided by practitioners who are not mental health specialists, such as GPs, health visitors, school nurses and teachers. At tier 2, practitioners tend to be CAMHS specialists such as primary care workers, psychologists and counsellors. At tier 3, practitioners are specialised workers such as community health workers, child psychologists or psychiatry out-patient services for more severe and complex and persistent disorders. Tier 4 services are provided for young people with the most serious problems through, for example, highly specialised out-patient and in-patient units.

Special school provision is mostly good, with outstanding aspects. Reorganisation of the area's special schools with the construction of a new special school and a new wing at an existing school has improved resources and the cost-effectiveness of provision. Staff have access to good training opportunities and schools are appropriately funded to support inclusion. Data are used well to monitor pupils' progress, including those with very low attainment levels. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress and many make good progress. There are adequate opportunities for these children to access leisure and social activities during the evening and weekend but options are limited for those who require special transport.

44. The council is making good progress in supporting the social and emotional development of children and young people with different forms of learning difficulties. Concerted action across a range of services is reducing behavioural problems which impede learning. Nurture groups are effective in providing structured and predictable learning environments. The council has received national recognition for its innovative work in this area and is increasingly effective in supporting children on the autistic spectrum in mainstream schools.

45. Transition planning for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is mostly well managed through a multi-agency transition group. Children and their families are supported well through change from early years to mainstream or special schools and from primary to secondary schools. Parents and carers are provided with well designed documentation and there is effective sharing of information between schools. A multi-agency resource panel ensures children are provided with appropriate resources and support. Parents comment positively on the consistency of support and the effort made to ensure they are involved in all aspects of the process. Transition to post-16 education and training is more varied and information sharing is not always timely. Insufficient education, employment and training options result in delays in decision making and families are not always fully involved in the process or kept informed of progress. Work placement opportunities for these young people are limited. Young people are supported well to promote independent living but have insufficient opportunities to gain work experience. Advice and assistance to secure benefits is generally good.

46. There is an appropriate range of respite opportunities. Threshold levels for residential respite services are set appropriately for children and young people with complex or severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They have appropriate access to provision commissioned by the council from the voluntary sector. Direct payments are available for parents to make their own choice of respite services but few parents choose to take up the option.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Early identification of needs and provision of support.</p> <p>Effective arrangements for statutory assessment of special educational needs.</p> <p>Progress in promoting inclusion in mainstream schools with low levels of statutory assessments.</p> <p>Strong multi-agency partnership working across health, education and social services.</p> <p>Well coordinated multi-agency assessment service.</p> <p>Good arrangements for providing children with specialist equipment.</p> <p>Prompt assessment following referral of children and young people to child and adolescent mental health services.</p> <p>Innovative support to improve children and young people's emotional well-being.</p>	<p>Access to speech and language therapy services.</p> <p>Planning for transition to post-16 education and training.</p> <p>Waiting times for tier 3 child and adolescent mental health services.</p>

Other issues identified for further investigation

An investigation into the contribution of local services to support and challenge schools in raising attainment

47. **The contribution of local services to support and challenge schools in raising attainment is good.** Pupils make at least satisfactory and often very good progress when compared with pupils with similar low starting points nationally. Children build well on the skills they develop during the foundation stage and continue to progress well at Key Stage 2. In 2006 progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 was good. As identified in the 2006 annual performance assessment, standards are broadly below national averages but improving. At Key Stage 2, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or better in English improved from 65% in 2003 to 71% in 2006, although in mathematics performance has been more variable. At Key Stage 4, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more good GCSE grades improved from 45% in 2003 to 49% in 2006. Girls attain significantly better than boys at

Key 4 reflecting the drift of more able boys to schools in neighbouring authorities. The proportion of young people gaining 5 GCSE grade A*-C including English and mathematics has shown significant improvement over a three year period and is above the rate in similar areas. Schools and colleges have broadened their 14-19 curriculum offer but the council and its partners have not provided a sufficiently clear lead in co-ordinating developments to ensure appropriate provision is available to all young people according to their needs. Much has been done to improve attendance rates which are broadly in line with similar areas and improving. The council has recognised that further improvements in outcomes for children and young people will depend in part on reorganising schools to address the level of surplus places and the drift of pupils to neighbouring authority schools which in particular has a disproportionate impact on boy's attainment at Key Stage 4. Consultation concerning the reorganisation of secondary schools, involving the closure of some schools and the establishment of new schools, had just been completed at the time of the inspection.

48. Actions to improve the performance of secondary schools have had a positive impact. Southampton has a greater proportion of outstanding secondary schools than most other local authorities. No secondary schools have been placed in special measures or given a notice to improve in their Ofsted inspections and all have exceeded the minimum targets for pupil attainment. Schools previously subject to special measures or serious weaknesses have been provided with very effective support. The support provided to primary schools found to have serious weaknesses has been very effective. At the time of the inspection, only two primary schools had been given a notice to improve. Although one third of primary schools have yet to achieve the minimum targets for pupil attainment, they were receiving well targeted and effective support at the time of the inspection.

49. The local authority has established an unequivocal priority for raising attainment, expressed clearly through a 'raising attainment' strategy which identifies accurately the key areas in need of improvement. A thorough analysis of performance data is undertaken and this has been used well to inform the strategy. Schools are in no doubt about this priority or the key areas for improvement. Action targeted at more deprived neighbourhoods has led to notable improvements. Relationships with schools are good and the local authority knows its schools well. The process through which performance is discussed with schools is well established and robust. Link advisers present strong challenge to schools; they make excellent use of detailed data, including information on the performance of individual pupils and different groups, such as boys and girls, looked after children, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and children from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Schools value the support for self-evaluation provided by this process. This support has assisted schools in identifying groups that are underachieving and setting realistic and challenging attainment targets. Senior officers of the local authority ensure schools, including governors, are aware of the local authority's view of individual schools' performance. This includes informing them when

performance is a matter of concern. Robust action is taken with schools needing significant improvement, including radical changes to governing bodies where appropriate. These schools are provided with a good level of effective support, resulting in their improvement. The level of support provided to schools is reduced appropriately as they become more able to manage their own improvement.

50. Support for early years and the Foundation Stage has ensured good quality provision and good progress for young children. Very good support for early years settings prior to registration is followed up by thorough monitoring and continued support.

51. Actions to improve attendance are having an impact although to a lesser extent in secondary schools. There have been rapid improvements recently in the education welfare service and multi-agency working to improve attendance in schools as a result of clear and well-focused leadership. Work with faith groups and travel agents is helping change both attitudes and practice as is the use of the legal enforcement options available to the council. The education welfare service provides good quality and detailed data on attendance to schools frequently. This is used well to provide challenge to schools on whether their practice is effective. This has resulted in more accurate coding in attendance registers and challenging practice such as study leave. Good support provided by the local authority to help develop children's emotional well-being is having an impact on behaviour across the primary and secondary sectors. This work, together with targeted work with individual schools, is having a positive impact on reducing incidences of intimidation and bullying. The location of members of ethnic minority achievement service (EMAS) within the education welfare service has improved work to secure admissions to schools for children from minority ethnic backgrounds. Good work on a city-wide basis has enabled smooth transition for pupils from the primary to secondary phase, making good use of electronic file transfers to ensure secondary schools have good information about the pupils early in the process. There is insufficient monitoring of the effectiveness of transition to post-16 provision.

52. There is good support for the teaching of English in schools, which has improved in the last three years along with that for mathematics. A very highly regarded music service contributes significantly to providing pupils with a broader curriculum, improving their confidence, self-esteem and skills. The local authority has facilitated several effective and innovative partnerships supporting curriculum development. The local education business partnership, 'Solent Skill Quest', has enabled certain schools to develop very productive business links, enhancing curriculum opportunities for pupils. Good links with voluntary and community sector organisations have extended the range of alternative provision available at Key Stage 4. Schools and colleges work together well to improve curriculum opportunities for 14-19 year olds. Overall, however, there has been insufficient co-ordination of developments to meet fully the aptitudes and interests of all pupils aged 14-19, resulting in less impact on attainment

than has been seen in other areas. There is a good range of well-attended subject and aspect networks for teachers. Agreement with a neighbouring local authority provides access for teachers to in-service training and networks unavailable within Southampton. Nevertheless, schools do not always find it easy to identify where they can get the full range of help they need both within Southampton and beyond. There is limited support for the foundation subjects and developing the 14–19 curriculum. Similarly, support for information and communications technology has been limited, but has improved in the last 18 months.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Progress made by many pupils from a low base.</p> <p>Improvement in schools where performance is a concern.</p> <p>Recent improvements in the challenge and support to schools to improve attendance.</p> <p>The challenge to schools by link advisers.</p> <p>Review of secondary education.</p> <p>Support for early years settings.</p> <p>Contribution of the music service to outcomes for some children and young people.</p>	<p>The standards reached by pupils are below the national averages at Key Stages 2 and 4.</p> <p>Attendance in primary and secondary schools.</p> <p>Support for developing the 14–19 curriculum.</p>

An investigation into the impact of local services in reducing the number of young people not in employment, education and training

53. **The impact of local services in reducing the number of young people not in employment, education and training is adequate.** The 2006 annual performance assessment reported that the proportion of young people categorised as not in education, employment or training was too high and identified reducing the number of these young people as an area for improvement. Over the past three years, sustained reductions in the proportion of young people classified as not in education, employment or training have been achieved, with the greatest impact over the last few months. The latest available data show a decline in the percentage of young people in this category from 12% in May 2006 to 9.6% in May 2007. Achievement at Key Stage 4 has improved over the same period and in 2006 was broadly in line with similar authorities. The staying on rate for post-16 education increased from 69.8% in 2004 to 77.8% in 2006 but is variable across schools.

54. The Connexions service is the key local partner in reducing the proportion of young people classified as not in education, employment or training. It has developed strong and effective links with the voluntary sector and with schools and colleges. Reducing the numbers of young people in this category is a priority in the area's Children and Young People's Plan. A multi-agency action group which includes representation from Connexions, the council and the local Learning and Skills Council was formed in November 2006 to co-ordinate existing activities and initiate new actions. It has produced a draft action plan which recognises the importance of taking both preventative and responsive measures to reduce the proportion of those categorised as not in education, employment or training.

55. Good targeted support is available from a team of Connexions personal advisers appointed specifically to support those who are not in education, employment or training. In addition, a number of projects have been funded to address weaknesses in this area and are succeeding in re-engaging young people through good partnership working. For example, of the 435 young people referred to the European Social Fund (ESF) 'Change your Life' project, 229 have successfully moved into education or employment. Key workers ensure timely and comprehensive support arrangements. Examples of good practice include the pathways team, which effectively supports care leavers, and the multi-agency REAcT project, which works in partnership with Connexions. There is good targeting of work to improve the self-confidence and emotional well-being of the most vulnerable groups who are the most difficult to re-engage in education, employment or training. The youth service provides good support for these young people, for example through the Positive Activities for Young People programme. Vulnerable young people who are not in education, employment or training, or at risk of becoming so, are also supported well through the voluntary sector, for example by the 'No Limits' service which receives funding from a number of sources including the local authority and Connexions. However, despite these different initiatives, coordinated support is not routinely available to all young people at risk. Since January 2006, schools have participated in an ESF project aimed at identifying those at risk of becoming disengaged from education, employment or training and providing targeted support to re-engage them. The work has been successful in raising awareness amongst schools of the need for early and effective intervention to prevent disaffection. The range of support available from statutory and voluntary agencies has not been mapped or effectively publicised to ensure that all young people who are at risk are appropriately supported.

56. Joint working through the Southampton Secondary Schools and Colleges Partnership has improved education and training opportunities available to young people aged 14–19. As a result, there is a wider choice of options at Key Stage 4. Schools do not have a common timetable however and the extent of collaborative arrangements between schools to maximise opportunities for all young people is limited. Schools do however make good use of the range of options at Key Stage 4 offered by Southampton's colleges. This provision has

increased from 37 courses offered in 2004/05 to 67 in 2006/07. Plans to open skills centres to extend vocational options for the 14–19 age range are well established and the first centres will be operational by September 2007. However, Southampton does not currently have a clear 14–19 curriculum framework that ensures all young people, including those who are not in employment, education or training or potentially so, have access to provision which meets their needs.

57. Over the past three years, schools, colleges and Connexions have held an annual 'Choices' conference for Year 11 pupils without firm plans for progression post-16. The conference is a good example of effective partnership work specifically focused on reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training, and has increased participation rates post-16. The availability of impartial information, advice and guidance on 14–19 education and training opportunities is currently insufficiently comprehensive for all young people to make informed decisions. The first 14–19 prospectus is planned to be available by September 2007. The secondary schools and colleges partnership has identified that the careers education and guidance is not sufficiently well developed in all schools, and is taking action to bring about improvement so that young people are better prepared for the world of work.

58. The post-16 curriculum offered by the three colleges based in Southampton has broadened considerably over the past few years. The colleges work collaboratively and share a strong commitment to extending post-16 educational opportunities. All have increased recruitment over the past three years and have extended the curriculum offer, particularly at levels 1 and 2, to provide more progression opportunities for young people who do not achieve five GCSE grades A*–C or equivalent at Key Stage 4. The colleges have identified the need to provide more short courses or courses with starting points throughout the year to effectively re-engage those who are not in education, employment or training in a timely fashion. Work based learning opportunities are insufficient to meet demand. The need to engage more employers is recognised by work based learning providers and by Connexions, and action is being taken to develop more productive links with local employers. The potential of Education to Employment provision as a means of re-engaging young people is not fully recognised, and current recruitment onto the provision is low. Although much has been done to broaden education and training opportunities for young people, the council and its partners have not provided a clear enough strategic lead in developing 14–19 provision that meets the needs of all young people.

59. Recent changes in the local economy, including the decline of the manufacturing sector, have reduced employment opportunities for school leavers and those who are not in education, employment or training. In January 2007, the unemployment rate for Southampton was 2.3% as compared to the south east average of 1.6%. Particular difficulties in gaining employment are experienced by those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A lack of appropriate accommodation also affects young people's ability to follow

education or training programmes and gain employment. The council has identified the need to improve accommodation available to young people, particularly those in vulnerable groups, and ensures that suitable accommodation for care leavers is prioritised until they reach the age of 18. Although practical support is provided by the voluntary sector, it is not sufficient to meet all needs of homeless young people who are not in education, employment or training.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Individual projects to reduce the numbers categorised as not in education, employment or training.</p> <p>Good commitment across institutions to partnership working to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training.</p> <p>Establishment of the multi-agency action group.</p> <p>Good actions taken by colleges and schools to develop appropriate progression opportunities.</p>	<p>Insufficient systematic coordination of support for those who are not in education, employment or training or at risk of becoming so.</p> <p>Insufficient strategic leadership for developing 14–19 provision to meet the needs of young people who are not in employment, education or training.</p> <p>Limited engagement of employers to provide training and employment opportunities for young people.</p>

Service management



Capacity to improve



60. **The management of services for children and young people is good. Capacity to improve further is good.** Senior managers provide a strong sense of direction and a realistic view of the significant challenges facing children's services. Clear leadership is being provided in addressing long-standing weakness in educational attainment and services for vulnerable groups of children and young people. Partnership working across health, social care and education is good. Changes to services are managed well and managers across the area have good change management skills. The impact of

developments in a number of key areas is still to be realised due to the early stage of their implementation. Planning is good at the directorate level and improvements are being implemented to ensure that performance management is better integrated across children's services to ensure consistent improvements in outcomes. Project management is good and resources are targeted well to meet new priorities. Although budget control and financial management are good, a consistent and rigorous approach to achieving value for money has not been established. Consequently there is insufficient evaluation of the costs and benefits of projects and initiatives.

61. Ambition for children and young people in Southampton is good and outcomes for children and young people have improved. For example, improvements to the youth service have improved support for vulnerable young people. Strategic leadership is effective and partnership working is good. Major stakeholders, including the voluntary sector, parents and children are actively involved in setting priorities. The quality of the Children and Young People's Plan is good and, following the 2006 annual performance assessment, has been strengthened through the inclusion of specific, measurable actions. It is clearly linked to other council plans such as the corporate plan and community strategy. Consultation and engagement with children and young people is good and their views, together with reliable data and detailed analyses of needs, inform ambitions well. The council is committed to improving engagement with young people, parents and carers from the most disadvantaged communities. The youth parliament is making good progress in ensuring that young people have an opportunity to voice their opinions at policy making level and young people were actively involved in the joint area review. The council recognises that more needs to be done to keep children and young people informed about the progress being made on the matters of concern which they have raised.

62. Prioritisation is good. Priorities are clearly stated in the Children and Young People's Plan and reflect the views expressed by children and young people well. The plan balances local and national priorities well and there is a clear focus on improving services within priority neighbourhoods. Business planning is good and follows the corporate approach newly adopted by the council which focuses on the accountability of service heads and the quality of planning and prioritisation. Currently, links between the Children and Young People's Plan, directorate business plans, service and team plans and individual staff member targets and actions are not always clear. The quality of service and team plans varies and a few are not sufficiently explicit about how progress will be monitored and evaluated. Further refinements of the planning process in 2008–09 were being implemented at the time of the inspection to better define these links in future. Resources are linked to priorities well and resources have been redirected to reflect changing priorities. For example, the closure of Kingsclear home for children in 2006 resulted in over £600,000 being redirected to support other programmes including foster care.

63. The council has achieved level 3 of the Equality Standard and has worked effectively with a diverse range of groups, including Travellers and speakers of English as an additional language. The Sure Start programme has successfully reached out to children, parents and carers from Black and minority ethnic communities. A team of 24 staff work well through 17 languages to ensure different minority ethnic communities are able to access and use Sure Start services. Processes for measuring outcomes are in place but do not always lead to improvement. Racist incidences are recorded by schools but the council is not yet using the data to support improvement.

64. Capacity is good. Partnership working is effective. Decision making is transparent and good quality, and regular and informative newsletters are produced for service users. The council has demonstrated its ability to take difficult decisions through, for example, the Learning Futures Programme and the decision to close two secondary schools. Significant improvements have been achieved in services such as the youth service, the education welfare service and services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Project management is good, follows the corporate methodology and demonstrates the effective use of risk management, financial planning and consultation. Communication with partners is good overall but schools and local communities have not always been clear about progress in implementing the Learning Futures Programme. The quality of leadership provided by the Director of Children's Services and senior managers is good, although the strategic capacity overall is currently stretched. This has been recognised by the council, and a reorganisation of the directorate together with the recruitment of two additional senior managers was being implemented at the time of the inspection.

65. Credibility and working relationships with schools and other partners is good. The lead councillor for children's services changed in May 2007 with the change in the council's political administration following local elections. The former lead councillor was very knowledgeable and passionate about her role and discharged her statutory responsibilities effectively. The new lead councillor is making good progress in understanding his new role.

66. Financial management is good. Successful work has been undertaken across education and social care to bring critical budgets under control. The council is consistently performing well on its use of resources, and resources are reallocated well to meet new priorities. The approach to achieving value for money is not sufficiently rigorous and systematic, however. There are some overlaps in services and there is insufficient analysis of the costs and benefits of projects and initiatives. Joint commissioning is at an early stage of development, as is the alignment and pooling of budgets.

67. Children's services make good use of staff and have the people and skills to deliver most priorities. Turnover has decreased significantly over the past two years from 14.6% in 2004–05 to 11.9% in 2005–06. Sickness absence at 3.8% is below the national average and expenditure on staff training is above

average. There are no significant recruitment and retention difficulties. A workforce strategy and implementation plan is at an early stage of development but is not currently sufficiently robust to support planned organisational changes and integration of service delivery.

68. Performance management is adequate. The council's corporate performance management framework is being implemented across children's services but it is not yet fully embedded. The council has recognised that processes are not fully integrated across the former education and social care services and is strengthening procedures to enable regular and systematic reporting and challenge of performance at all levels. Information gained from implementing performance management and quality assurance procedures in social care is not used consistently to improve services. A stronger and more focused approach to performance management in learning services has led to service improvements in priority areas of educational achievement. The use of staff appraisals is good but the results of the latest staff survey show that not all staff have been appraised. Scrutiny is adequate but under resourced and portfolio holders and officers are consequently not subject to sufficient challenge on service performance. When better resourced in the past, detailed enquiries by scrutiny led to significant improvements in, for example, services for reducing anti-social behaviour by children.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Strong sense of direction provided by senior managers.</p> <p>Partnership working and good commitment to improve outcomes for children and young people.</p> <p>Open and transparent approach to decision making.</p> <p>Consultation with all children and young people.</p>	<p>Lack of a consistent and rigorous approach to performance management and insufficient resources to fully support scrutiny.</p> <p>More rigour and consistency in developing and monitoring the implementation of action plans.</p> <p>Lack of a strategic approach to workforce planning.</p>

Annex A

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded
The contribution of the local authority's children's services in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The council's overall capacity to improve its services for children and young people	3

The overall contribution of the local authority's services to improving and maintaining outcomes for children and young people is good. Although some rates of increase are small compared to the national picture, the upward trend in many areas shows evidence of good progress which at times exceeds that of the authority's statistical neighbours. There is particularly good multi-agency working which is helping to promote healthier lifestyles. However, the number of core assessments to assess the needs of children, although increasing, remains too low; furthermore, the timeliness of reviews for looked after children requires improvement.

The local authority's performance in enabling children and young people to make a positive contribution is excellent. There is also a good range of initiatives to promote personal safety awareness.

There are good levels of attainment at Key Stage 4 in the school with a sixth form and in some of the 11–16 schools. Children and young people achieve particularly well in music and physical education. However, standards overall remain broadly below the national average even though pupils make satisfactory progress from low starting points in many cases. Despite the recent progress in levels of attendance, these are still low in primary and secondary schools. Furthermore, the number of young people not in education, employment or training is still too high.

The local authority has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and has clear and shared priorities for improvement. It has good capacity to improve its services further.

The full annual performance assessment can be found at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=80922&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\apa_2006_852.pdf

Annex B

CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. The annual performance assessment 2006 found that national targets set for the health of children and young people had been met in most areas and exceeded in some, and judged the contribution of the council to outcomes in this area to be good. Good multi agency promotion of healthy lifestyles underpins strategies to reduce teenage conceptions and high rates of sexually transmitted infections including Chlamydia. Substance misuse admissions to hospitals continue to be high. Children and young people are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and are benefiting from the healthy schools programme and increased participation in physical activity. Targeted work on reducing obesity is having an impact. Dental decay is increasing among younger children and is a priority area for improvement. Access to child and adolescent mental health services is generally good, although waiting times are sometimes long. The health needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are responded to promptly through multi-disciplinary teams. Services to promote the health of looked after children are good, although waiting times for child and adolescent mental health services can again vary.

2. Most children feel very safe or quite safe. The 2006 annual performance assessment judged performance in keeping children safe to be good in most areas, and in many instances performance has been maintained. In other areas there is inconsistency in undertaking comprehensive assessments of children's needs, delayed intervention and insufficiently rigorous implementation of quality assurance procedures. Priorities are clearly set out in the area's Children and Young People's Plan and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board has made a positive start in identifying and addressing priorities. Services are improving through multi-agency arrangements, but in many instances it is too early to judge the full impact of collaborative arrangements and initiatives. The joint area review concluded that safeguarding arrangements are adequate.

3. Most children and young people in care receive good personal care and support services underpinned by clear multi-agency arrangements and good shared values. However, security in placement has yet to be achieved consistently and looked after children and young people are more likely to be absent from school than in comparable areas. The council's corporate parenting group does not challenge performance sufficiently. Overall, services for looked after children are adequate. Services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good and inter-agency working across health, education and social care is strong. The needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are assessed promptly and met successfully, enabling them to enjoy learning and make sound progress. A strategy of early intervention is beginning to have an impact. Transition planning is well

managed but support at transition to post-16 education and training is more variable.

4. Action to help children and young people enjoy and achieve is mostly effective. As identified in the 2006 annual performance assessment, standards are broadly below national averages but improving. Support provided to early years settings is helping raise standards. By the end of Key Stage 1, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are broadly in line with the national average. The difference between boys and girls at the end of Key Stage 4 is wider than is the case nationally. This is being addressed through the review of secondary education, with the reduction in the proportion of single sex schools in the city. Overall, pupils make at least satisfactory and often very good progress given their low starting points. Concerted action to improve attendance is beginning to have an impact. Schools are focusing well on improving outcomes for vulnerable groups, for example exclusion rates for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very low and well thought out behaviour management strategies are having an impact. This joint area review found the contribution of local services to support and challenge schools in raising attainment to be good. Schools are in no doubt about this priority or the key areas for improvement. The proportion of schools judged as outstanding by Ofsted is higher than the national average. Link advisers present strong challenge to schools, making excellent use of detailed data, including information on the performance of individual pupils and different groups, such as looked after children, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. Robust action is taken with schools in need of significant improvement. The youth service is good and works particularly well in targeting work to support vulnerable groups of young people. Children and young people have good access to activities they enjoy, including an excellent range of opportunities for sport, music and the arts in general.

5. Services work well together to help children and young people make a positive contribution. Children and young people, including vulnerable groups such as looked after children, have many opportunities to involve themselves in voluntary work and voice their views. Their comments are taken seriously. Actions to reduce anti-social behaviour are having an impact.

6. The council and its partners have been successful in improving post-16 staying on rates but the proportion of young people achieving a level 2 qualification at age 19, although improving, continues to be well below the national average. This joint area review found the contribution of partners to reducing the proportion of young people who are not in employment, education or training to be adequate. Different projects and initiatives are having an impact on the numbers of young people who are not in employment, education or training. Curriculum opportunities for 14–19 year olds have improved through partnership working between schools and colleges, but there is insufficient coordination of actions to broaden opportunities for all those who are not in employment, education or training. Different forms of support are

available for young people who are not in employment, education or training or at risk of becoming so, but this support is not coordinated systematically. The council is working well to provide good childcare provision targeted at areas of greatest deprivation and is supporting parents well to raise their aspirations, secure the benefits to which they are entitled and improve their earning capacity.

7. The 2006 annual performance assessment judged service management and capacity to improve further to be good. This joint area review has confirmed these judgements. Although outcomes for children and young people are broadly adequate, the council and its partners are addressing long-standing weaknesses in educational attainment and services for vulnerable young people well. They have adopted a long-term strategy of improving preventative services and promoting sustainable improvements across a broad front. The impact of these actions will take time to become fully manifest, although there is clear evidence of improvement in, for example, the youth service, the education welfare service, services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and collaborative working across health, education and social care. Senior managers have not shied away from difficult tasks such as reorganising secondary schools and the reorganisation of the delivery of front-line services. The council has recognised that capacity is stretched and new senior appointments are being made to lead key aspects of the Children and Young People's Plan.

Annex C

SUMMARY OF JOINT AREA REVIEW AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS

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 inspectors from Ofsted, the Healthcare Commission 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 these findings plus aspects of the most recent annual performance assessment 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 Southampton and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being. Together with the annual performance assessment of children's services, 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. This review explores these issues by focusing on children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, children who are looked after and children at risk or requiring safeguarding, and a few additional investigations. It evaluates the collective contribution made by all relevant children's services to outcomes for these children and young people.
4. The review took place in two stages consisting of an analysis stage (where recorded evidence was scrutinised) and a two-week fieldwork stage (where inspectors met children and young people and those who deliver services for them).