

# Joint area review

**Worcestershire Children's Services Authority Area**

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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  
Ofsted

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## Introduction

1. The most recent Annual Performance Assessment (APA) for Worcestershire County Council judged the council's children's services as outstanding and its capacity to improve as outstanding.
2. This report assesses the contribution of local services in ensuring that children and young people:
  - at risk, or requiring safeguarding are effectively cared for
  - who are looked after achieve the best possible outcomes
  - with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve the best possible outcomes.

## Context

3. Worcestershire is made up of six Districts: Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Redditch, Worcester City, Wychavon and Wyre Forest. Despite the rural nature of much of the county approximately 60% of the total population lives in urban areas.
4. Approximately 552,900 people live in Worcestershire and just below a quarter of these are children and young people under the age of 20. In the last 10 years, the number of children and young people in Worcestershire has decreased and the number of 0-19 year olds is forecast to decrease further by 2010 at a rate greater than the national average. The percentage of children and young people under 20 years old is lower than the national average except in Redditch where it is higher.
5. Around 4.5% of the total population and 5.5% of children and young people in Worcestershire come from Black and ethnic minority (BME) groups. This is lower than the regional and national averages. There are about 5,000 Gypsies and Travellers in the county, of which just fewer than 400 are children aged 0-16 years. Most families are long-term settled, some for several hundred years, although seasonal travel is a way of life for many of these families.
6. Redditch has the highest proportion of children and young people from Black and minority ethnic groups (nearly 9%) which is above the national average (7.9%). However, some areas of Worcester City and Wyre Forest also have higher than average populations of Pakistani and Bangladeshi children and young people. Worcestershire has experienced a sizeable inflow of immigrants since the addition of European Union new member states, particularly from Poland, the Slovak Republic, Republic of Lithuania and Hungary. The Workers Registration Scheme indicates that the majority of these reside in Wychavon and Redditch.

7. Whilst Worcestershire is generally a prosperous and affluent county, 47 out of 361 super output areas are amongst the 30% most deprived in England. These areas are not restricted to urban areas and are geographically small, but they are areas in which deprivation is highly concentrated. Access to services can be difficult for children, young people and families living in rural areas. Although the proportion of economically inactive households is relatively low at 17.5% and the proportion of those claiming benefits is lower than the national average, there has been an increase in the proportion of 0-14 year olds living in households where no one is working.

8. Early year's provision includes 305 private or voluntary early year's settings, 541 childminders, one nursery school and 53 nursery units. There are 179 first/primary schools, five middle schools deemed primary, 17 middle schools deemed secondary, 29 secondary schools, 10 special schools and nine pupil referral units.

9. Post-16 education and training is provided by five further education colleges, 22 mainstream high schools with sixth forms and 16 work-based training providers. Entry to Employment provision is arranged through Learning and Skills (LSC) contracts with LSC Connexions (180), Beacon Employment (143), Community Service Volunteers (43), Kidderminster College (85) and New College (40). There are five local 14-19 consortia which oversee post-16 provision.

10. Adult and community learning including family learning is provided by Worcestershire County Council, Worcester College of Technology, Worcester Sixth Form College, New College (with campuses in Bromsgrove and Redditch), Malvern Hills College and Kidderminster College.

11. Primary health care is provided by Worcestershire Primary Care Trust (PCT), which was formed in October 2006 following the merger of three PCTs in Worcestershire, and now has a boundary co-terminus with Worcestershire County Council. Acute hospital services are provided by Worcestershire Acute NHS Trust and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are provided by Worcestershire PCT.

12. Children's social care services are provided through 187 foster carers, five residential care homes and two short breaks units. Family support services are integrated in area teams and there are nine bases around the county which deliver family support and direct delivery services. There are 13 field social work teams, four fostering teams and three adoption teams.

13. There are no Young Offender Institutions in the area.

## **Main Findings**

14. The main findings of this joint area review are as follows:

- Arrangements for safeguarding children and young people in Worcestershire are good. Partners give the highest possible priority to safeguarding and contribute well to providing a safe environment. Multi-agency work provides a well-considered range of accessible services to reduce risks of harm with good leadership by the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board. Most children and young people feel safe and those in need of protection plans are given skilled help. Newly implemented arrangements for managing the referral and assessment of children in need of protection are satisfactory overall although there are some gaps in capacity and practice with resulting inconsistent performance in the first year.
- Overall outcomes for looked after children in Worcestershire are good and improving. Educational attainment is improving and the gap between looked after children and their peers is narrowing. Most children and young people in care are placed in good quality, stable placements provided through clear commissioning arrangements. Planning and services for young people leaving care require further development and investment.
- Outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. The local authority has taken a strong strategic lead in developing inclusive provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is good multi-agency support for young children with complex needs and educational outcomes are improving but analysis of progress made by children and young people working below National Curriculum levels is late in being developed. There is generally good practice in safeguarding for these children and young people but specific additional safeguarding training for staff working with these children has not been available recently.
- The management of services for children and young people and capacity to improve are good. The council's longstanding relationship with its partners in relation to children services has been strengthened through the creation of the Children's Trust along with a review of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). This involved widespread consultation which informed the priorities and actions in the plan and set a clear direction for services for children and young people which is well endorsed by stakeholders. Performance management is good but wider member involvement in performance management is limited.

## Grades

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

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

## 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
- increase social care staff capacity and ensure the quality and consistency of management systems and practice in the contact, referral and assessment services
- ensure that appropriate additional training in safeguarding is provided for staff working with children with disabilities.

### For action over the next six months

- Ensure that local authority data collection and analysis systems are developed to measure achievement and progress made by children and young people working below National Curriculum levels.
- Ensure effective Personal Education Plans and Pathway Plans are in place for all looked after children.
- Further develop support services for care leavers, and ensure access to sufficient suitable accommodation to meet the needs of vulnerable care leavers.
- Develop strategies which deliver more transparency in reporting on performance management to the Children's Trust and councillors

## For action in the longer term

- Ensure targets in all plans are clearly linked to resources and outcomes

## Equality and diversity

15. The local authority and its partners demonstrate a strong commitment to equality and diversity which is a central part of the CYPP. The authority complies with current legislation but the equality and diversity strategy lacks detail of implementation. Voluntary agencies are represented on key strategic groups and a number of community cohesion projects have been successfully piloted. However, some further work is required to engage with smaller interest groups.

16. Consultation processes are used well to help identify priorities and key areas for improvement. The authority and its partners are very responsive to the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Support for new arrivals such as unaccompanied asylum seekers and children from Eastern Europe are particularly well co-ordinated. Access to multi-lingual translation services and education for children and parents is good. The Children's Fund successfully promotes social inclusion through a very wide range of targeted projects. Voluntary agencies are used well to extend services to young people in more rural areas although the authority recognises that access to services for families, children and young people living in rural areas is not always as good as those living elsewhere.

17. Data is used effectively to identify and support underachieving minority groups. Positive actions have been taken to address weaknesses in attendance and achievement at Key Stage 4 identified in the CYPP, through a targeted BME, Gypsy Roma and Traveller achievement programme. The West Midlands Travellers Consortium has been extremely successful in working with a range of partners to provide a wide range of learning opportunities for Travellers and their families. This is highly valued by children, young people and their families. Many younger Traveller children are fully integrated into mainstream schooling. The authority promotes the tradition and history of the travelling community in schools and public venues so that young Travellers have their sense of self esteem and community pride validated.

## Safeguarding



18. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people at risk, or requiring safeguarding is good.**

<b>Major strengths</b>	<b>Important weaknesses</b>
<p>Outstanding awareness and prioritisation of safeguarding strategies in children's services and partner organisations.</p> <p>An excellent culture of engagement with children and young people, their families and communities with evident impact on the provision of safe environments.</p> <p>Good leadership and strong governance arrangements in Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board.</p> <p>Good capacity to communicate and collaborate on safeguarding according to guidance as a result of reorganisation in children's services and in partner agencies.</p> <p>Ambitious and well targeted programmes support healthy lifestyles.</p> <p>Children and young people subject to protection plans are supported skilfully.</p>	<p>Some inconsistencies in decision making, timely completion of tasks and routine recording of the views and ethnicity of children and young people in contact, referral and assessment services.</p>

19. The APA in 2007 judged the contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in staying safe to be outstanding. In reviewing progress in the year 2007/08 across the wider safeguarding agenda the area self-assessed that services make a good contribution and outcomes are good overall. This joint area review confirms that assessment.

20. The level of priority given to promoting a broad safeguarding agenda across the Children's Trust and other partnerships is outstanding. Structural changes in services have brought about a clear focus on promoting good outcomes in safety and well-being, with responsibilities for preventative support shared throughout all services. Worcestershire PCT has designated and named child protection staff in place and the NHS Acute Trust has strategic links to Children's Services at board level. The engagement of fire and rescue services, district councils and schools in the safeguarding agenda is notably effective and in some cases innovative, as in the action to reduce arson on the Devil's Spittlefull nature reserve during school holidays.

21. An excellent culture of the council and partners consulting with children and young people, their families and communities on safety issues is reflected in the development of protective strategies and the provision of safe environments. The great majority of children and young people responding to the Big Questionnaire, a survey organised and conducted through the Youth Cabinet and reaching over 8,000 young people, and the Tellus2 survey carried out in September 2007, said they feel safe in schools, when out and about in their areas and in their homes. These views are more positive overall than those found nationally and were confirmed by the comments of young people inspectors met during the review. Extensive consultation has helped reshape proposals for a revised anti-bullying strategy, building on effective practice in schools. Youth forum members, the police, health representatives and voluntary organisations such as Worcestershire Women's Aid have contributed to effective multi-agency strategies on hate crime and domestic violence. Greater awareness among partners has resulted in more rigorous multi-agency protective action and appropriately increased referrals to children's services.

22. The inspection findings on standards of safety in early years and childcare provision, schools and colleges are good in comparison to the national picture. There are robust systems for dealing with children's complaints. Pupils have been influential in setting safe routes to school. The number of serious road accidents suffered by children up to the age of 15 has decreased at a significantly faster rate than nationally and is very low. Emergency admissions to hospital for those aged 0-19 are low in all districts except Redditch and Worcester where they are in line with similar areas and the national average.

23. There are highly ambitious programmes to support healthy lifestyles and social and emotional well-being with good outcomes. Instant Atlas<sup>1</sup> has helped services to effectively analyse areas of greatest need and target preventative support at, for example, substance misuse and teenage pregnancies. Improved planning and resources have resulted in an improvement in the quality of sex education in schools. There are some early local indications that targeted intervention has brought about a decline in pregnancy rates in young women under 18 in areas with the highest proportions of teenage pregnancy. Data available locally indicates that teenage pregnancy rates are below the national average and declining more sharply; the area has confidence that they are on course to reach the national reduction target. Extended schools have social and emotional well-being at the heart of their programmes and their placement in urban and rural areas across the county has been thoughtfully planned. Worcestershire is making good progress on healthy schools, with 99% engaged in the programme, although young people say that they would like more affordable healthy school meals.

24. Access to CAMHS is satisfactory overall. The strategy links preventative and non-specialist services to wider emotional well-being strategies. The range of informal support and early intervention, for instance the Time for U clinics in

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<sup>1</sup> *Instant Atlas is a web based tool which enhances visual communication of location-based statistical data.*

10 schools, is good, although not enough is known about the outcomes. Development of target setting and evaluation of a comprehensive service is at an early stage. Some vulnerable groups have good access to consultation and advice and are referred promptly to specialist services. An action plan to fill key vacant psychologist posts and improve the previously long waits for all non-urgent specialist services has been successfully implemented. CAMHS tackled the waiting list for assessment robustly in May 2008 and waiting times for non-urgent assessments are now minimal. As a result, the number of children and young people waiting for treatment has significantly reduced.

25. A good and accessible range of services support prevention of harm and promote safeguarding with good emphasis on multi-agency early intervention. Parents have a high regard for children's centres where they can access a wide range of advice and services in one setting. Voluntary and community sector settings, such as Wallace House, Barnardo's and NSPCC, add greatly to specialised and targeted work. The schools' cluster strategy enables precise identification of need at the local level. Integrated youth support achieves a sound balance of universal, specialist and targeted work with a clear emphasis on safeguarding and promoting equal access for all young people.

26. Support for early intervention is good. The restructuring of Family Assessment and Support Teams (FAST) during 2007/08 has played a strong part in early intervention through the integration of family support, educational psychology, education welfare and social work assessment teams. The geographical coverage of FAST and resources within the teams are based closely on the analysis of local need. Workers are adept at using translation services for traditional Asian community languages and newly emerging language groups which form a very small proportion of the population in the area. The access system, a central telephone call centre, is well received by professional and partner agencies as procedures for referral are systematic and communication is good. There is, however, no evaluation of the impact on user-families.

27. The well-considered approach to the roll out of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) reflected the area's investment in making sure that all partners understand the process. The placement of CAF co-ordinators in assessment teams has added considerably to partners' understanding of appropriate levels for referral and the services available. Networking of professionals across disciplines has been promoted well. Much is done by the wide range of support services, including the voluntary and community sector (VCS), to prevent referral to social care services being necessary and Worcestershire has a low rate of referral which is under half the national average.

28. Performance on referral and assessment is satisfactory overall. Agreed referral and assessment arrangements are compliant with national guidance and built around the requirements of government guidance in *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. Because of pre-screening of contacts by the

access centre almost all referrals result in initial assessments. Morale has remained good and some social workers have dealt capably with heavy workloads. Supervision of cases is good and some management audit of cases takes place. Appropriate management records are collated but there is little evidence of this on individual case files. Good practice, multi-agency audit of files is not yet in place. Although rising, the proportion of core assessments for children in need is in line with national average and the rate for their completion within the recommended 35 day timescale is excellent (87% compared with 78% nationally). Numbers of child protection enquiries are not greatly different from the national picture although slightly above similar authorities. The proportion of re-referrals is low.

29. The implementation of an electronic recording system and electronic integrated children's system (ICS) together with the major reorganisation was viewed very positively in the 2007 APA. However, timeliness of initial assessment and convening child protection conferences were highlighted as areas for improvement. Although in a few cases there remain delays in assessment processes resulting from capacity and staff development issues, satisfactory progress has been made in improving the timeliness of initial assessments, rising from about 49% completed in the required timescales to over 67% at the time of the review. Performance on convening child protection conferences within the timescales has been significantly better than the national average for seven years and remains so, with an overall performance of 73% of conferences convened on time.

30. The full benefits of the reorganisation of assessment and support systems are not yet evident although the positive approach of staff to working with the new systems is commendable. Recording on the new systems is sometimes slow and adds significantly to the workload of staff. This is recognised by senior managers as an area for development in FAST. There are some inconsistencies in key areas of recording, such as the voice of the child and ethnicity.

31. Inter-agency child protection practice is generally well managed. All cases are allocated to qualified social workers and all reviews are on time. Children and young people who may be particularly vulnerable to harm or abuse, such as young carers and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are skilfully supported. The length of time that children and young people are subject to protection plans is well managed, with good monitoring during and at the end of the protection plans. Very few children require a second or subsequent protection plan and they, and their parents and carers, are strongly involved in planning. However, senior managers recognise that the thresholds for responding to escalating concerns are not always consistently applied. Managers are investigating the reasons for the significant rise in numbers of cases that have been categorised as neglect in the last two years.

32. Worcestershire Safeguarding Children's Board is well established with committed membership, strong business planning and monitoring processes and an agreed wide safeguarding remit. The board identified improvements for

2008/09 that have been effectively implemented with the appointment of an independent chair and strengthened scrutiny procedures. Inter-agency policies and procedures are comprehensive, reviewed regularly and reflect regulatory requirements. Investigations of serious incidents and serious case reviews are carried out in line with national requirements and Ofsted's assessment of a recently completed review found that the learning and impact on practice was good.

33. Procedures for recruitment of staff in services working with or caring for children and young people are safe and all councillors have Criminal Record Bureau checks. There is sufficient training and support from Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board to all partner agencies, including those in the voluntary and community sectors. Inconsistencies of recording vetting information identified during the joint area review were promptly dealt with.

34. Highly effective communications between key agencies and the police ensure that the joint agency approach to the management of sex offenders in the community and multi-agency public protection arrangements work well. There are excellent, comprehensive, monitoring procedures to ensure the identity and whereabouts of all children 0-16 are known and to ensure the welfare of those who are not in school, or educated at home, or who are 17 and 18 but may be vulnerable. The few private foster care arrangements that are identified in the area are monitored effectively.

35. Agencies involved in prevention of re-offending focus effectively on safeguarding. Work in Oldington and Foley Park is a good example of a whole community approach with good provision of guidance to children and young people about staying safe. There is effective collaboration to target resources to hotspots of anti-social behaviour and the Prevent and Deter programme has been successful. Offending is low in most areas and fewer young people are entering the criminal justice system. Re-offending rates are low among some targeted vulnerable groups such as looked after young people, but due to limited success with other groups, for example young people on community penalties, the overall rate for the area is rising and is above the national average.

## Looked after children and young people



36. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people in Worcestershire is good. There are some outstanding features.**

<b>Major strengths</b>	<b>Important weaknesses</b>
<p>Excellent Integrated Multi-disciplinary Support Service for Looked after Children.</p> <p>All looked after children reviews are held on time with high percentage (97%) contributing their views.</p> <p>Educational attainment is improving and the gap between looked after children and their peers is narrowing at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4.</p> <p>Placement stability is good with effective and efficient commissioning of placements for looked after children.</p> <p>Robust arrangements for Corporate Parenting with very good engagement with the Children in Care Council.</p> <p>Looked after children are fully involved in the Healthy Care Partnership and are engaged well in community and leisure activities.</p>	<p>Low performance on percentage of looked after children with Personal Education Plans and Pathway Plans.</p> <p>Full range of support for care leavers is underdeveloped, in particular, access to suitable accommodation.</p>

37. Outcomes for looked after children in Worcestershire are improving and some very good outcomes are achieved particularly for younger children. However, this is less consistent for young people leaving care. Adoption and Fostering Services inspections in 2007 judged services to be good.

38. A good range of family support services have been developed to work with families and to prevent children coming into care. Dedicated family support teams in each local area are aligned with the social work teams and provide intensive support to families. Family support workers based in the children's centres provide good local support to families. A small group of support carers have been recruited to provide day and overnight breaks for children aged 5-15 who are at risk of becoming looked after. These services also support the work to return children home from care whenever this is possible.

39. There are clear, well-managed decision-making arrangements for the accommodation of children. At the end of March 2008, there were 479 looked after children. The number of looked after children has risen slightly over the last two years following several years of reductions but remains below the national average (40% in 2006/07 compared with 54.6% nationally). The

percentage of children in care from an ethnic minority background has increased largely as a result of the accommodation of more unaccompanied young people, who now make up approximately 10% of the looked after population. There is a good awareness and specific provision in place to address the cultural needs of BME children. Positive action is taken to ensure that BME children are enabled to participate fully in their reviews with use, where needed, of interpreters and translation of the papers.

40. The multi-agency Integrated Service for Looked after Children (ISL) provides an outstanding range of additional support to children in care and their carers. The team has over 40 staff including health and mental health practitioners, social workers, early years' advisors, education and learning support staff, and a community and leisure development worker. It is demonstrably improving outcomes and is highly regarded by children, their carers and other agencies, particularly schools.

41. There is excellent performance on the timeliness of child care reviews. All are held on time and these are managed creatively by a team of very experienced Independent Reviewing Officers. Almost all (97%) looked after children are allocated to a suitably qualified social worker. The percentage of children with a timely health check was 82% compared with 76% in similar authorities and 84% nationally in 2007/08. There is a clear ambition to improve and initiatives are in place to increase further the percentage held on time, including an excellent health DVD produced by young people.

42. ISL supports children throughout their schooling, working closely with carers and schools, providing periods of intensive, individualised, multi-agency support. The educational attainment of looked after children has improved at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. The gap between their attainment and that of all children in school in Worcestershire is narrowing. For example, the percentage achieving the required attainment at Key Stage 3 increased from 25% to 35% between 2006 and 2007 whilst the overall Worcestershire percentage of children achieving the required level remained at 76%. Although a high percentage have identified special needs, more than 30% compared with 3% in the county generally, good results are being achieved with all of those sitting a GCSE achieving at least one A\*-G, approximately 80% gaining five A\*-G and 20% five A\*-C in 2007.

43. Experienced mentors in the team offer proactive, long-term support to children in Years 10 and 11. The mentoring scheme aims to raise the achievement, aspirations and self-esteem of young people by supporting them with coursework, revision, self-organisation and participation. The attendance of looked after children is good with only 10.7% missing 25 days or more in 2006/07 which is significantly better than similar authorities (17.6%) and nationally (13.3%). However, Personal Education Plans were in place for only 62% of these children and young people at the end of last year and this percentage had decreased from 78% the year before. Excellent provision is in place for children to enjoy many physical and cultural opportunities. These

include individually planned programmes and participation in the holiday programme which more than 80 children and young people attend each year.

44. Placement stability for children in care is good and most children are placed within the county or close by. Commissioning is used very effectively to ensure a suitable range of placements is available, with use of internal and local residential and foster care placements as the first choice in order to maximise access to the Integrated Service. Recent local data shows that the rate of adoption and special guardianship has increased from 6.7% in 2006/07 to 9.8% in 2007/08. The post-adoption support team provides excellent support and guidance to adoptive families with continuing support from the Integrated Service for adopted children.

45. The Healthy Care Partnership takes a proactive approach to ensuring that provision of healthcare is effective. Healthy eating and engagement in sport are positively promoted by residential and foster carers. When young people completed a local healthy care questionnaire recently, this showed that most felt that they were healthy, that they participated in some form of exercise, and that they felt somewhere between happy and just alright. However, it also identified fairly high levels of worry about bullying and concern for the behaviours of others. These issues have been prioritised for action in the CYPP.

46. A Children in Care Council, "Who Cares? We Care!" has been established and a group of children and young people have helped to develop the Council's Pledge for Looked after Children. Almost all looked after children participate in their reviews and various creative methods, including photographs, pictograms and cartoons, have been used to ensure that each child can make a meaningful contribution and be heard. There are low rates of offending amongst young people in care. An effective restorative justice programme has been introduced into the residential homes.

47. Support for care leavers is adequate overall. Services are improving, but not sufficiently quickly. A designated senior post-16 manager is being established in all the local Further Education Colleges following very positive outcomes from a pilot in Worcester. Several young people have been supported to consider going to university this year through collaborative events with local universities. Most young people stay in care until they are 18 with a good continuation rate beyond this. At the time of the inspection more than 20 care leavers had remained with their foster carers beyond the age of 18. The ratio of care leavers in education, employment or training or is 0.68%. This is below performance in similar authorities (0.75%) and nationally (0.76%). Accommodation for care leavers is limited. Plans are in place for new accommodation for the future but some young people are placed inappropriately in bed and breakfast accommodation. Some young people do not yet have the level of support needed. For example, only 52% of care leavers have a pathway plan - a slight improvement on the 48% in 2006/07.

48. There are excellent arrangements for corporate parenting; a strong well-informed Corporate Parenting Board made up of county council and district council members meets regularly and actively engages with looked after children through the Children in Care Council. There is a clear, strong ambition for those looked after by the council and close attention is being paid to the views of these children and young people.

## Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



49. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Effective strategic lead on developing inclusive provision in mainstream schools.</p> <p>Commitment of staff across all agencies to remove barriers to achievement.</p> <p>Multi-agency support for young children with complex needs.</p> <p>Improving outcomes in education.</p> <p>Special school provision of advice and training for mainstream settings to meet a wide range of needs.</p> <p>Support for parents in the statutory assessment process.</p> <p>Effective and genuine consultation with children, young people and their parents and carers.</p>	<p>Lack of recent safeguarding training for staff working with children with disabilities.</p> <p>Analysis of achievement and progress of pupils working below National Curriculum levels.</p>

50. The local authority has made good progress in the drive for improvement in services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with a strong focus on working in partnership with schools, parents, young people and other agencies. Consultation procedures with service users are strong as noted in the 2007 APA. Senior officers have been at the forefront

of the development of a strong inclusion strategy based on placing the needs of the child at the centre of planning and removing barriers to their achievement.

51. The well-planned location of Learning Resource Centres for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and Mainstream Autism Bases in schools has improved inclusion and choice. Parents welcome this development and are pleased with the opportunities this affords their children. Whilst headteachers are positive about this strategy and the enhancements of the flexibility offered to pupils by units and bases within mainstream schools, there is some concern about the lack of clarity regarding the completion date for the school reorganisation and the final range of provision across the authority.

52. Good multi-agency working through the Team Around the Child approach using the CAF is ensuring that the needs of young children with complex needs are being identified early. Good support from early years' services helps children to integrate well into mainstream settings wherever possible. The allocation of a key worker ensures that a wide range of support, tailored to individual needs, is effectively co-ordinated. However, parents report that this is not so well developed for older children.

53. Schools are provided with high quality support, advice and training to enable them to meet a wide range of needs. Specialist teachers and, increasingly, teachers from special schools, play a significant part in promoting and supporting the inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in mainstream settings. There have been no permanent exclusions from special schools for over three years. Analysis by the authority of 2006/07 data shows that for pupils with statements, fixed-term exclusions reduced from 12.3% to 11.3%, and permanent exclusions declined from 8.7% to 2.9%, compared with the previous year. This confirms a trend over the last four years of a lower exclusion rate for pupils with statements than similar authorities and nationally.

54. Outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are generally good and improving. The local authority challenges schools well on the quality of provision and outcomes as an integral part of school improvement discussions. The authority has good data on attainment by pupils working within National Curriculum levels at all stages of special needs support. School inspection reports and local analysis of the 2007 test results show these pupils generally make good progress. Small step measures of progress, such as P-scales, have been used well by special schools and some mainstream schools to assess the progress of individual pupils. However, use across schools has not been consistent and the local authority has therefore not been able to collate and analyse the progress of pupils working below national curriculum levels. Plans to address this issue are in hand but are late in being developed.

55. Young people with medical and complex health needs receive good multi-agency support with examples of good links between healthcare professionals and other agencies. However, for children and young people in mainstream

settings access routes are less well-defined, with agencies referring to health services through general practitioners or school nurses. CAMHS support is effective for young people attending pupil referral units with higher level needs but responses are slower for young people with less acute needs.

56. Schools receive funding and clear guidance on support which should be provided by the school to meet the majority of needs, with applications for additional support being the exception for the most complex of cases. As a result, the number of new statements issued has declined from 313 in 2004 to 192 in 2007. The Parent Partnership Service is very effective in supporting parents through the statutory assessment process and in providing training for parents and schools. Parents report that this is important in helping them understand the process and ensuring good communication with schools in order to meet the needs of their children. The timescales for the completion of statutory assessments of special needs with allowable exceptions have remained consistently good in comparison with similar authorities. Partners have worked hard to improve the timeliness of statutory assessments where, in the past, there have been delays. Statements are of good quality and annual reviews are monitored to ensure consistency across settings.

57. The Children with Disabilities team provides consistently good social care support for children, young people and their families. An effective range of short break provision is available for those with complex needs, from statutory and voluntary agencies. Where shortfalls in short break provision have been identified imaginative solutions have been developed to meet need. The authority has detailed plans in place to use the Aiming High for Disabled Children initiative to improve short break provision and reduce waiting times.

58. Practice in safeguarding children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is generally good. There is a clear referral pathway for concerns relating to children and young people with complex and severe needs with joint work undertaken between duty social workers and the Children with Disabilities team. The authority acknowledges that specific, additional safeguarding training for staff working with children with disabilities has not been offered in the past year, and there are, therefore, staff working with these children and young people who have not received this additional training. This has been brought to the attention of the Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Board. The role of the carers' development worker is effective in ensuring parents' needs are assessed.

59. Special schools and the voluntary sector provide a good range of recreational, leisure and cultural facilities but the authority recognises that access to these can be limited due to location. The opportunities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to be included in mainstream recreation and leisure activities can also be limited. This is endorsed by the views of children and young people in the "Big Questionnaire" and has been identified as an area for improvement in the CYPP.

60. Transition planning for 16–19 year olds is generally good. Whilst there are clear guidelines for all agencies involved, planning is at an early stage for the development of a transition team to improve cohesion in this process. There are good links between child and adult social care teams but transition from paediatric into adult health services is recognised as an area for improvement. Transitions to college are managed well, particularly by Connexions Advisers.

61. A good overall range of post-16 provision results in a lower percentage of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 16–19 who are not in education, employment or training than in similar authorities. However, some young people do not have their first choice of subject and can sometimes repeat aspects of work completed earlier. This can lead to them withdrawing from courses early.

62. The local authority has a strong track record of enabling these children and young people to make a positive contribution to their community. This begins in some excellent practice in schools and extends to consultation exercises such as Making Life Better and the Child's Voice Conferences. The Youth Opportunities Fund is used well to support activities through Funding Lots of Stuff (FLOSS) to involve and support young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in local decision making. The authority demonstrates its strong commitment to consultation through the support of a development officer for the Parents' and Carers' Council which is an effective vehicle for consultation.

## Service Management



## Capacity to improve



63. **The management of services for children and young people is good. Capacity to improve further is good.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Significant change management in the last two years resulting in strong engagement with integrated services at all levels within the partnership.</p> <p>Strong leadership with children championed in each partner organisation.</p> <p>Good, and improving, performance indicators for children and young people.</p> <p>Clear and agreed vision for how children's services will develop in future, from all partners including schools.</p> <p>Widespread commitment to, and effective, corporate parenting.</p>	<p>Capacity issues in social care services impacting on some aspects of performance.</p> <p>Some high level targets not clearly linked to resources and outcomes.</p> <p>Insufficient public accountability in performance management processes.</p>

64. The management of services to children and young people is good. The capacity to improve further is good. The council has a longstanding relationship with its partners in relation to children services. This benefited from reorganisation in 2007 resulting in the consolidation of children's trust arrangements and a clear distinction between commissioners and providers of services, enabling a better focus on both strategic and service development. The CYPP was reviewed following the reorganisation of the partnership. There was widespread consultation on the CYPP, including "The Big Questionnaire", the results of which played a significant part in informing the priorities and actions in the plan. The council and its partners have a clear direction for services for children and young people which is well endorsed by stakeholders.

65. Ambitions for children and young people are good. There is a clear focus on improving outcomes for all, and reducing inequalities. Partners have shared objectives for children and young people, for example around safeguarding and the welfare of the most vulnerable children and young people. The local strategic partnership, Worcestershire Partnership, has a clear focus on children and young people and this ensures effective strategic and operational leadership.

66. There is a good understanding amongst partners of local need, assisted well by the use of Instant Atlas<sup>2</sup>. There are clear links between the CYPP, council and partnership plans. The council's strategy documents within the

<sup>2</sup> *Instant Atlas is a web based tool which enhances the visual communication of location-based statistical data*

Children's Trust link well to the CYPP but it is not always clear how individual projects and activities support the priorities in the plan, nor is it clear what impact strategies have on outcomes. There is a clear commitment to meeting the needs of diverse communities but some documents lack clarity as to how diverse needs will be met. The council and its partners are currently developing integrated services at a local level based around the development of a school cluster model to enable partners to develop integrated provision targeted at need.

67. The Partnership's approach to setting priorities is good, is based on an understanding of local need and shaped by the response to "The Big Questionnaire". The council and its partners have identified safeguarding and raising achievement as overarching priorities and these priorities are well understood by staff and stakeholders. The partnership can identify outcomes at both cohort and geographic levels, down to ward level, through Instant Atlas and in this way is able to direct activity to priority areas.

68. There are clear priorities within the CYPP influenced by consultation with stakeholders. For example, the council is developing provision around community cohesion as young people's lack of understanding of new migrants was revealed through "The Big Questionnaire". Although the views of children and young people, their parents and carers are widely canvassed, some cohorts, for example lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people and smaller voluntary and community groups, feel that their views are not as routinely or effectively sought. When captured, the views of young people are used well to shape services.

69. The council directs some resources to priority areas, for example the additional deprivation funding it has received through the dedicated schools grant and from savings accrued from better procurement. The council's annual budget setting process, the Strategy Week, also enables financial resources to be allocated to priority areas. The partnership does not yet systematically redirect resources to priorities but plans to improve the ability to direct resource to priorities through the development of their joint commissioning strategy. Performance and financial management are not sufficiently linked and as a consequence it is not always clear how additional resources impact on unit costs and outcomes.

70. The CYPP Action Plan and service action plans clearly state lead responsibilities and accountabilities thus facilitating the delivery of priorities. Within children's services the target setting process is clear and most targets at service level are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound. However, the resources required to deliver the targets are not always explicit and the council and its partners have further work to do to ensure there is equitable access to services across the entire council area.

71. The capacity of the partnership is good. For the last two years the council has invested in moving from the traditional education and children's social care provision to a fully integrated children's service. This investment has achieved an outstanding cultural change with all staff at all levels and across partner organisations demonstrating both an understanding of, and commitment to, the changes. There has been no loss of service during this time, and indeed progress has been steady. The changes have resulted in better integrated working at a local level and a good focus on preventative services, for example the social care FAST teams. There have also been good outcomes achieved at this time, for example at Key Stages 2 and 3 the achievement gap between children looked after and their peers has narrowed and school achievement overall has improved.

72. Capacity has been enhanced well through the use of the VCS to provide some specialised services although the council's current procurement process is seen by some smaller voluntary sector organisations to be both lengthy and unwieldy and thus a barrier to bidding for work. Capacity has also been enhanced by the delegation of small levels of funding to elected members for youth work in their areas, to be distributed and audited according to council guidelines. This funding has enabled local members to get a better understanding of issues for young people in their area and to develop their understanding of community cohesion. It has also increased youth work capacity as small, local VCS groups are supporting the delivery of youth work. This increase in capacity has resulted in 23,000 young people being reached since the scheme began.

73. The capacity to improve further is good. Senior officers within the partner organisations and councillors provide clear leadership and decisions are taken in a timely fashion. There is a track record of service improvements and the council's Overview and Scrutiny Steering Committee has contributed excellently to enhancing capacity, for example in the review of outdoor education provision. There has been successful joint commissioning in the past, largely through aligning budgets, and there are now clear, but early, plans to develop this further through the use of pooled budgets and engagement of a wider range of partners. These developments are equipping the council and its partners well to achieve the step-change they desire for children and young people in the area.

74. Governance arrangements within the partnership, including within the Safeguarding Board, are strong. Corporate Parenting is also strong. The partnership has particular workforce challenges and sustained staff vacancies within children's social work services, despite agency cover, have had an adverse impact on some aspects of performance, particularly relating to timeliness of assessments. Partners continue to address these issues and have developed a good range of strategies to recruit and retain staff. These include bursaries for trainee social workers and post qualification training. Staff development processes within the council are particularly strong and personal development opportunities are good. The staff development process clearly

links individual staff objectives to service and corporate objectives and staff are encouraged to reflect on objectives and priorities within their service areas. This enables both upward feedback and shared ownership of priorities. Cross-agency training has improved integrated working, enabling staff to understand each other's role and the connections between services. All of this indicates good capacity for further improvement. However, sharing good practice is underdeveloped.

75. The council provides good value for money and uses its resources well, ensuring it is efficient in its service provision. For example, it has had success in removing surplus school places and is keeping surplus places under review. Overall costs are broadly in line with similar authorities and, where they exceed these, the council has a clear understanding of why this is. It has strategies to reduce expenditure where appropriate. More effective procurement has been used well to achieve savings, for example in the allocation of the home-to-school transport contract and children looked after placement provision.

76. Opportunities for young people to contribute to decision making are good. There are a number of representative groups of young people for example school councils and the Youth Cabinet, but there are limited opportunities for these representative groups to meet together and learn from each other to enhance their capacity.

77. Performance management is good. There are clear and robust performance monitoring processes at the service, departmental, corporate and partnership levels, and very good performance management within the children's services' department which has resulted in good and improving performance indicators. The Performance Board within children's services reviews all indicators on a regular basis, taking into account progress against targets, risks, barriers to improvement, and evidence of impact on improved outcomes. The Lead Member for Children's Services also has access to full performance information through the council's electronic systems and holds the leadership team to account on a monthly basis. Steady progress on most key performance indicators shows that this process works well. Detailed performance information is available to all managers within children's services. Performance management arrangements within the children's trust are in place but, as the trust in its current form is relatively new, outcomes from the process are yet to be seen. However, partners are aware of each others' performance, and hold each other to account.

78. Internally the partnership has a good understanding of most aspects of its own performance, for example underperforming schools or teenage pregnancy "hotspots". As a consequence it has focused successfully on those areas to drive improvement.

79. User involvement is good. Users are actively involved in developing services they need and user feedback, including complaints, is used to drive improvement and, where appropriate, shape service provision. The council is

open to external evaluation and challenge and generally uses benchmarking data well to help drive improvement.

80. Wider member involvement in performance management is more limited. Performance reports to Cabinet are at the level of the Corporate Plan and are biannual and, whilst scrutiny has a positive impact when it reviews specific service areas, it does not, as a committee, review performance management reports. There is therefore limited public accountability.

## Annex A

### **MOST RECENTLY PUBLISHED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN WORCESTERSHIRE**

#### **Summary**

The overall effectiveness of the council remains outstanding. It consistently delivers services for children and young people which are very well coordinated and managed. The council knows its strengths and has a clear understanding of what it needs to do to further improve. There is a focus on and a commitment to improving the lives of children and young people across Worcestershire. The council has recently undergone considerable re-organisation and restructuring of the children and young people's service which is now complete. This has led to more localised services focusing on prevention through strong partnership working. Senior officers are very clear about their roles and responsibilities, and the strong and visionary corporate leadership, including effective discharge of corporate parenting responsibilities, is further strengthened by integrated working with the new single Primary Care Trust (PCT). The significant challenge of moving from a three tier to a two tier education system is being well managed. The council continues to make a significant contribution to improving the achievement and well-being of its children and young people.

The full annual performance assessment can be found at:

[http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=3146&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa\\_2007\\_885.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=3146&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa_2007_885.pdf)

## Annex B

### **CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

1. Outcomes for children and young people in Worcestershire are good overall. Arrangements to ensure that children in need of safeguarding are identified and supported are good. Outcomes for looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. Children and young people are generally healthy and action is being taken to tackle longstanding health inequalities. Educational outcomes are good and are generally in line with the national average. The council's engagement of children and young people in local decision making is good. Outcomes for young people to achieve economic wellbeing are good.
2. The management of services to children and young people is good. Ambitions for children and young people are good with a clear focus on improving outcomes for all. The Partnership's approach to setting priorities is good but some higher level targets are not clearly linked to resources and outcomes. The CYPP was influenced well by consultation with stakeholders but some smaller minority groups feel their views are not systematically sought. The capacity of the partnership is good. Senior officers within the partner organisations and councillors provide clear leadership and decisions are taken in a timely fashion. There are clear plans to develop joint commissioning further through the use of pooled budgets. The council offers good value for money and uses its resources well. Capacity has been enhanced through the use of the VCS to provide some specialised services and by the delegation of small levels of funding to councillors for youth work in their areas. However, a shortage of social workers has had an impact on some aspects of performance. Governance arrangements within the partnership, and Corporate Parenting, are strong. Performance management is good with clear and robust performance monitoring at the service, departmental, corporate and partnership levels. Wider councillor involvement in performance management is limited.
3. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well for children and young people of all ages across all agencies. There has been good progress on achieving Healthy School standards with 99% of schools engaged in this programme. Strategies to reduce the rates of teenage pregnancy and substance misuse have been reviewed and there are some early local indications that pregnancy rates in under 18 year olds are beginning to decline. Waiting times for mental health service referrals for higher level intervention have reduced. Access to CAMHS for young people with less complex needs can still be inconsistent. Looked after children's health needs are met very effectively through the Healthy Care Partnership. Young people with medical and complex health needs receive good multi-agency support with examples of good links between healthcare professionals and other agencies. Transitions from child to adult health services are in need of improvement.

4. Children and young people appear safe and arrangements to ensure this are good. Partners give outstanding priority to safeguarding strategies and contribute well to providing a safe environment. Multi-agency work provides a well-considered range of accessible services with good leadership by the Worcestershire Local Safeguarding Children Board. Most children and young people feel safe and those in need of protection plans are given skilled help. Systems and practice for managing the referral and assessment of children in need of protection are satisfactory overall although some staff capacity and development issues impact on the consistency of recording, timing and management oversight. Inspection findings on standards of safety in early years and childcare provision, schools and colleges are good. There is effective collaboration to target resources to hotspots of anti-social behaviour and the Prevent and Deter programme has been successful. Offending is low in most areas and fewer young people are entering the criminal justice system. Re-offending rates are low among some targeted vulnerable groups such as looked after young people, but due to limited success with other groups, for example young people on community penalties, the overall rate for the area is rising and is above the national average.

5. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and to achieve well is good. Outcomes are in line with or above the national average and similar areas, and the trend of improvement at Key Stage 2 is better than national. School inspections judge the majority of schools to make good or better provision. Attendance and exclusions are generally in line with national expectations. Very effective support is provided by The West Midlands Travellers Consortium to Traveller families and many younger Traveller children are fully integrated into mainstream schooling. Integrated Support Services for looked after children and young people provide excellent support. The educational attainment of looked after children has improved and the gap between their attainment and that of other children in Worcestershire is narrowing. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities working within national curriculum levels make generally good progress but the local authority has not yet systematically collected and analysed the progress of those working below national curriculum levels.

6. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. Children are very well supported in their social and emotional development and services work well together to support identified vulnerable groups. Children and young people's involvement in making decisions about the services provided by the council, particularly from vulnerable groups, is given a very strong focus. School councils and the Youth Cabinet are firmly established and informed the review of the CYPP, but there are limited opportunities for these representative groups to meet together and learn from each other to enhance their capacity. Mechanisms for involving looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are embedded in practice.

7. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good. Transitions from school to further education are generally good with a falling trend in the number of young people not in education, employment or training at the age of 16-18. Success rates, achievement, and attendance post-16 are good. A good overall range of post-16 provision results in fewer young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 16-19 who are not in education, employment or training than in similar authorities. However, young people do not always have their first choice of subject and some withdraw from courses early. Support for care leavers is adequate and improving. However, planning and services for young people leaving care still require further development and investment. In particular, accommodation for care leavers is limited.

8. The capacity of council services to improve is good. Senior officers within the partner organisations and councillors provide clear leadership and decisions are taken in a timely fashion. There is a track record of service improvements and the council's Overview and Scrutiny Steering Committee has contributed excellently to enhancing capacity. For the last two years the council has invested in moving from the traditional education and children's social care provision to a fully integrated children's service. This investment has achieved an outstanding cultural change with all staff at all levels and across partner organisations demonstrating both an understanding of, and commitment to, the changes. There has been no loss of service during this time, and indeed progress has been steady. The changes are equipping the council and its partners to achieve the step-change they desire for children and young people in the area.

## 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 Worcestershire 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 focussing 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).