



Joint area review

Windsor and Maidenhead Children's Services
Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

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

Audience	Published	Reference no.
All	10 October 2006	868



© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the local authority or at www.ofsted.gov.uk

Contents

Introduction	2
Context	3
Summary Report	5
Grades	9
Recommendations	10
Main Report	11
Outcomes for children and young people	11
The impact of local services	13
Being healthy	13
Staying safe	15
Enjoying and achieving	17
Making a positive contribution	19
Achieving economic well-being	21
Service management	23
Annex: The children and young people's section of the corporate assessment report	25

Introduction

1. This joint area review was conducted in October and November 2005 using the arrangements required under Section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of nine inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), the Healthcare Commission (CHAI), the Adult Learning Inspectorate and the Audit Commission. The review was undertaken according to the requirements of the *Framework for the Inspection of Children's Services*.

2. The review was linked to the contemporaneous corporate assessment of the local council by the Audit Commission and its findings are represented in the relevant part of the corporate assessment report. The review also drew on evidence from contemporaneous inspections of the youth service and the Youth Offending Team

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

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

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

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

6. The second stage incorporated inspection fieldwork. This included studies of how far local services have improved outcomes for a small sample of children and young people, some of whom have the most complex needs, and a study of provision in the Ellington neighbourhood area. It also included gathering evidence on nine key judgements, selected because of their critical importance to improving outcomes for children and young people in the local area. A review of case files for children and young people receiving support from a number of local agencies was also included.

Context

7. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) is one of six unitary authorities in a part of the area that was previously Berkshire County Council. It is a relatively small authority with a population of 133,600. The borough is in a strategic location in the heart of 'silicon valley' along the M4, close to Heathrow airport and about twenty miles west of London. As a result of its location, it has attracted a number of large employers.

8. Although 83% of the borough is designated Green Belt, it is relatively densely populated. Most people live in the two urban centres of Windsor and Maidenhead, with Maidenhead being twice the size of Windsor. There are fourteen rural parishes, which include Ascot, the Royal Borough's third town, and Eton Town Council.

9. Fifty five per cent of households are employed in either the professional or managerial/ technical social classes compared to 38% in Great Britain. House prices within the borough are the highest outside Greater London and twice the national average.

10. Unemployment is very low at 1.6 per cent, compared with 3.7% nationally. The Royal Borough is ranked 343 out of 354 councils in England and Wales in terms of overall deprivation. It is, therefore, an affluent area. There are pockets of deprivation, but the general high standard of living can mask these.

11. People from black and minority ethnic groups comprise 7.6% of the total population. About 4.6% of the total population have Asian or Asian British ethnic minority backgrounds. There are well-established Muslim and Sikh communities in Maidenhead, where there are effective interfaith and inter community partnerships. Sixteen and a half per cent of pupils in the Royal Borough are of black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

12. Local authority services for children are currently delivered through separate social services, education, leisure, cultural and property directorates. A range of preventative services are commissioned from the voluntary sector. Proposals for the establishment of a single directorate for children's services are to be subject to wider consultation with staff and partners, after discussion at Cabinet in December 2005. The council expects to have a Director of Children's

services in post for April 2006. Children's health services in the area are provided by Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead PCT, Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals NHS Trust and Berkshire Healthcare NHS Trust (based at the St Marks Hospital site). Policing services are provided by Thames Valley Police.

13. There is currently a lead member for education and one for social services. At the time of the review, future governance arrangements had not yet been finalised by members.

14. The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership is chaired by the Chief Executive of RBWM. Membership includes the PCT Chief Executive, the directors of social services and education, head teacher representatives, police, Connexions and the voluntary sector. The partnership is the main vehicle for planning and delivery of the Every Child Matters agenda, and will take the lead on commissioning within the new arrangements. Multi-agency partnership working is already taking place at an operational level through a multi-disciplinary service for disabled children.

15. There are in the region of 30,000 children aged 0-18 within RBWM, of which 77 are looked after. Some 2.3% of the population aged under 19 years has a statement of special educational need.

16. Social care services for children are delivered through offices in Windsor and Maidenhead, with a central duty and assessment team located within Maidenhead. Education services are delivered from a number of sites, with strategic services located at the town hall in Maidenhead.

17. There are 50 primary schools, including four nursery schools and 14 first schools, five infant schools and four junior schools. There are 13 secondary schools, including four middle schools. There is one special school and two Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). There are seven resource units attached to mainstream schools supporting children and young people with special educational needs in the areas of hearing impairment, speech and language therapy, physical and specific learning difficulties. There is also enhanced provision at one secondary school for pupils with social communication difficulties in the Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

18. The Learning and Skills Council Berkshire (LSC) works in partnership with the local authority, colleges and schools in addressing the 14-19 strategy. Post-16 education and training is provided by a college of further education, a college of agriculture, and nine sixth forms. Local provision of work-based learning is provided by the two colleges. Schools in Maidenhead work together in a sixth form consortium to improve access to GCE subjects. Entry to Employment (E2E) provision for 26 learners is managed by a private provider in Maidenhead. Adult and community learning, including family learning, is provided by the local authority in partnership with local adult education providers, including two further education colleges, schools and a range of local community-based organisations. There is significant movement of pupils between the borough and neighbouring authorities. Thirty two per cent of

pupils in RBWM schools who are continuing education after Year 11 progress to schools and colleges outside the Royal Borough.

Summary Report

Outcomes for children and young people

19. **Outcomes for children and young people are good.** They have good health outcomes; mortality is low and, across most indices, there are low disease rates. The main exception is in relation to immunisation rates and their associated infections, where outcomes are more variable. Children and young people generally feel safe. There is good, targeted, support to improve the safety and outcomes for children and young people at highest risk. However, the rate of child protection activity is comparatively low for disabled children and for those at risk of physical and sexual abuse. Within social services, performance indicators relating to completion of assessment do not follow the national guidance. There is no written procedure which identifies the process and management responsibilities for considering those staff for which Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks reveal concerns.

20. Children in early years' settings and school pupils make good progress and achieve well. The standards that school pupils attain are broadly in line with similar councils. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Looked after children perform better than the national average at school. Young people are involved in activities in their school and their local communities, although there is a greater range of activities in Maidenhead than other areas. The majority think it is possible to have a say in the provision. Schools work positively with children and young people and encourage their contribution to good standards of behaviour. A high proportion of 16-18 year olds are in full-time education; almost all are in education, employment or training. Learners in school sixth forms generally achieve in line with, or better than, expectations. There is low achievement of full work-based learning qualifications. All looked after children have allocated social workers and most benefit from good joined up health provision and educational support.

The impact of local services

Being healthy

21. **The work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is adequate.** There is effective targeted support for vulnerable groups, for example young mothers, parents of substance misusers and Asian women. Good health promotion work is taking place on a multi-agency basis within schools and this is having a positive impact on addressing emotional and behavioural issues, substance misuse and the provision of sex and relationships advice. There is good provision of leisure facilities in the area and physical activity is promoted by a range of professionals. There is good access for children at the local Accident and Emergency department, with a

higher than national proportion of children's nurses, and good one hour wait and four hour discharge proportions.

22. There is good early intervention for mental health support offered by a range of professionals. However, the specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) team does not operate as a fully integrated multi-professional team and suffers from weak assessment and referral processes. For example, not all children referred to CAMHS receive the benefit of specialist psychiatric assessment and liaison arrangements are weak. In particular, outcomes of referrals are not fed back routinely to the referrer. There is effective interagency health support for looked after children. However, the health services provided for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their parents is patchy. Although families referred to the Child Development Centre (CDC) receive a good service, those children who do not meet the threshold for referral to CDC do not always receive effective support. As a result, they are unlikely to have a multi-agency care plan or named coordinator of services provided. Provision of therapy services is poor, particularly for paediatric occupational therapy.

Staying safe

23. **The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good.** Children and young people generally feel safe. In schools they are informed about key risks to their safety and how to deal with them. The performance of schools in relation to reducing and preventing bullying is generally good. Schools' child protection procedures are also good, with designated teachers offering effective guidance and training through multi-agency programmes. Agencies work well together in responding to domestic violence.

24. There are clear systems of referral and assessment for child protection. The Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) is, however, poorly resourced and it does not have a satisfactory system for monitoring the overall effectiveness of the child protection system. The rate of child protection activity is comparatively low for disabled children and for physical and sexual abuse, but there are comprehensive family support services provided to those with the highest needs. All children on the child protection register are allocated to a social worker.

25. Personnel working with children are subject to CRB checks. However, there is no written procedure on clearance when such checks reveal concerns and management processes and decisions are not adequately recorded on personnel files.

26. Overall, looked after children receive a good quality social work service in most cases. There are examples of extremely good practice where safe and supportive placements are made, including some notable support to young asylum-seekers. All looked after children have an allocated social worker. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities feel safe

in school, and in the area, and have people they can talk to if they are experiencing difficulties.

Enjoying and achieving

27. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good. The youngest children make good progress and are well provided for. Standards of attainment overall are consistently above national average. The progress of pupils between key stages is generally above the national average. Pupils with special educational needs achieve better than similar pupils nationally, as do looked after children. Standards of attainment are consistently broadly in line with statistical neighbours. Many children, especially in nurseries and primary schools, enjoy their education. The impact of the growing multi-disciplinary partnership teams that support children's learning and development is good. Evidence in the Ellington area indicates that parents welcome the increasing opportunities to learn with their children. The council's inclusion support services and Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (EMAS) are good. The impact of this work is evident in the progress made by targeted groups and individual pupils. The Youth Service provides a good range of voluntary learning opportunities for young people, and some achieve with high standards.

28. School improvement services give good support to national strategies for raising attainment. There are no schools in formal categories of concern or with serious weaknesses, and the school with an inadequate sixth form is receiving satisfactory support from the council and making progress. The data on attainment and progress is used well by service managers. However, senior managers do not have, or use, all the data they need to analyse the progress of the most vulnerable and lowest attaining groups. Some secondary schools indicate that the rigour of challenge offered by local authority advisers is variable and that they would welcome a more robust approach.

29. The support and education provision for looked after children is mainly good and the percentage of these pupils achieving five or more grades A*-C at GCSE examinations in the last two years has been above the national average. The significant reduction in the number of exclusions in the last year has been achieved by effective planning for behaviour support between schools, the tuition and behaviour support services and the PRUs. The provision for pupils educated out of school is variable. The majority receive appropriate teaching time and good opportunities for learning but, in a minority of cases, the amount and suitability of lessons and other learning experiences are inadequate. All mainstream schools have attendance rates broadly in line with the national average, and in more than a third it is above average.

30. A significant number of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are educated outside of the Royal Borough. The council's inclusion strategy has the potential to enable more of these children and young people to be educated locally, and wherever possible, in mainstream schools.

Making a positive contribution

31. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. Children and young people are supported effectively by the council and its partners to develop both socially and emotionally. They are encouraged to behave responsibly, help each other and contribute to the community through work in schools, youth clubs and other settings. Much progress has been made by the council and its partners in developing opportunities for young people to affect decision-making, although opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are limited. There is good support for young people experiencing difficulties such as drug-related problems, and there is good access to counselling. Most young people who are looked after contribute effectively to their reviews. There are successful activities led by the youth service and youth offending team to prevent anti-social behaviour and discourage young people from starting to offend. Work with children and young people who offend is generally good, although the re-offending rates remain a matter for concern.

Achieving economic well being

32. The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is adequate. The local partnership's effective work on community integration benefits children and young people, particularly through its links with safety initiatives and the youth service. Families are well supported through childcare arrangements and adult and community learning opportunities. Although affordable housing is in short supply, the council has made satisfactory progress in building affordable homes, and vulnerable families and young people are appropriately housed. The numbers of young people in education, training or employment are consistently high. There is satisfactory coordination of 14-19 education and training in the borough, but there has been limited progress in the implementation of the strategy. The local authority has yet to secure the commitment of all schools to the 14-19 strategy. There has been some progress in collaborative provision, although the range of vocational courses is limited. The Connexions service is providing much good support for vulnerable young people. However, not all pupils receive impartial information, advice and guidance, from their schools, on the full range of opportunities available outside their own sixth forms. There are good transitional arrangements for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and for those leaving care.

Service management

33. The management of services for children and young people is adequate. The capacity to improve further is also adequate. The children's and young people's strategic partnership is in place and partners are strongly committed to working together to deliver the new children's agenda. The council and its partners do not have a clearly articulated and shared understanding of the needs of children and young people in the borough.

Consequently there is no clear strategic approach to addressing those needs. Some secondary headteachers expressed strong concerns about partnership and strategic working within the council. The approach to priority setting across the council is variable.

34. Financial management is adequate overall. However, the special needs budget in education services has required particular attention in order to slow the increase in spending. Scrutiny and challenge in the council as a whole is not effective. The corporate leadership plays an active role in overseeing the improvement of social services and education. Individual lead members are well regarded and there is active member involvement in corporate parenting responsibilities for looked after children.

Grades

Grades awarded:

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

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

Recommendations

For immediate action:

- CAMHS should ensure that systems are developed for communicating the outcome and progress of referrals.
- ACPC should be appropriately resourced so that it can introduce satisfactory systems for monitoring the overall effectiveness of the child protection system.
- The Director of Social Services should ensure that the measurement of performance indicators in relation to assessment within social services follow the national guidance.
- The council should ensure that written procedures are in place identifying management responsibilities and clearance processes in relation to staff recruitment when issues arise in relation to CRB checks.

For action over the next six months:

- The council and its partners should develop a comprehensive CAMHS strategy that ensures a fully integrated, multi-professional specialist CAMHS team is in place, with robust assessment and referral processes.
- The council and its partners should ensure that all assessed children with learning difficulties and disabilities have multi-agency care plans and an identified key worker co-ordinating their care.
- The PCT should review the provision of therapy services to ensure that they are sufficient to meet the assessed needs of children and young people within the borough.
- The education director should ensure that senior managers have available, and use, data on the progress and attainment of the most vulnerable and the lowest attaining pupils and identify the interventions and support that are needed. Such interventions should be regularly monitored and reviewed.
- The Connexions service, schools and partners, should improve access to impartial information, advice and guidance to all pupils on the full range of options available to them at age 16.

For action in the longer term

The council and its partners should:

- ensure full implementation of their inclusive aims to reduce the number of children and young people with specific and complex needs who receive services located outside their own communities and mainstream schools, so that they can access high quality provision close to home.
- improve access to post-16 provision at levels below advanced level, including for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- provide access to a broader range of vocational options for pupils aged 14 and above.

Main report

Outcomes for children and young people

35. Outcomes for children and young people are good.

36. **Children and young people are generally healthy.** In a recent survey, a higher than average proportion of young people reported that they think they are very healthy. In many aspects, outcomes are good; there are lower than average rates of sexually transmitted disease, teenage pregnancy, perinatal mortality, low birth weight babies and infant and child deaths. In addition, smoking rates in pregnancy are low, breast feeding rates are higher than the national average, dental health is good and admissions to hospital for asthma, gastro-intestinal illness and respiratory tract infections are low. However, there is a more inconsistent picture in relation to vaccinations; with the exception of vaccinations for measles, mumps and rubella, there is generally good uptake rates at age 2 years, but variable uptake by the age of 5. There is a concomitant high incidence of measles and whooping cough in the area, especially among young people under the age of 15.

37. **Children and young people are generally safe.** The majority of children and young people feel safe in their communities and schools. Although the perception and incidence of bullying has increased, the performance of schools in relation to reducing bullying is generally good. There is good and targeted support to improve the safety and outcomes for children and young people at highest risk. All children on the child protection register and those looked after have an allocated social worker. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities feel safe and can talk to people in school if they are experiencing difficulties. There are effective arrangements for those with complex needs for transferring into adult services. Support to young asylum-seekers is very good.

38. **Children and young people are prepared well for school and the majority achieve well.** Sufficient early education and child care places exist to meet the needs of children and parents in the borough, including free places. Despite pressures on places in certain schools, the number available is sufficient

and the surplus is kept to a minimum. Admissions policies give due priority to pupils with a statement of special educational need and to looked after children. Attendance at school is broadly in line with national averages. The standards of attainment achieved by most children are above the national average and are in line with attainment in similar authorities. Permanent exclusions from primary schools have been above national levels but have now fallen; exclusion rates are below the national average in secondary schools. A good protocol exists between secondary schools to implement managed moves that can sustain inclusion and there is high quality behaviour support from the local authority used mainly by primary schools. School inspections indicate that the provision for the majority of pupils with special educational needs is good. Children looked after by the authority have good attendance and their attainment at GCSE is above the national average for looked after children.

39. Children and young people are able to contribute their views, affect decision-making and to support their communities. The views of young people have shaped the development of local priorities within the visions and values for children's services. The views of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for example, influenced the design of summer holiday provision. The youth service has successfully targeted activities at young people at risk of anti-social behaviour, leading to more responsible behaviour by young people and greater engagement in looking after their local area. There is satisfactory access for young people with disabilities to leisure and recreational opportunities, but there is not enough extended day care and respite provision. Most looked after young people contribute their views effectively to their reviews. There has been a reduction in the number of young people who offend, and in the overall number of offences; however, there is an above average rate of re-offending.

40. Children and young people are able to achieve economic well being and are prepared adequately for working life. There is much effective help for young people in preparing for working life and for economic well-being. Support for families and community cohesion is beneficial for young people, and arrangements for housing are satisfactory overall. There is a high participation rate in education by 16-18 year olds and a low proportion of young people not in education, employment or training. School pupils have improving access to vocational programmes at Key Stage 4, but the range of options is limited. Sixth formers have access to a widening range of GCE subjects owing to effective collaboration between schools. However, there is insufficient vocational provision in schools post-16, and too few courses at levels below advanced. The apprentice framework completion rate for work-based learners is poor. The proportion of young people gaining five GCSE grades A*-C is consistently above national average, as is the proportion of local residents achieving a level 2 equivalent by age 19. Advanced level point scores are below average for similar authorities, but the achievements of learners in school sixth forms are generally in line with or better than would be expected from their prior qualifications. Eighty per cent of young people who have offended are in education, employment or training, which is below target.

The impact of local public services

Being healthy

41. **The work of all local services in maintaining the health of children and young people is adequate.** A range of good quality support is offered to parents to keep their children healthy. Support for young mothers is effective and successfully targeted at their needs. All health visitors are trained to promote breast-feeding and there is a good drop-in service for breast-feeding mothers as well as a number of breast-feeding support groups. There are two support groups run on a partnership basis with local voluntary organisations. These groups provide a forum in which education, advice and support are given by professionals, and they also act as a bridge for signposting young mothers to other agencies that may be of benefit. Alongside their universal service, the health visitors also effectively target other vulnerable groups including the homeless, traveller and Asian communities.

42. There is some good support for parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For instance, the Early Bird Project provides support for parents of children on the autistic spectrum, and the comprehensive publication, *Signposts: Children's Information Service*, directs parents to the range of support and services that are available. However, not all parents are aware of such support and services and groups only exist for certain conditions and not others. The Parents in Partnership forum provides a good opportunity for parents of children with a range of disabilities to meet and discuss with representatives from the statutory agencies the issues that are affecting them.

43. Healthy lifestyles are successfully promoted for children at school. There has been a good rollout of the national Healthy Schools Programme with increasing numbers of schools participating. The Royal Borough, working well in partnership with East Berkshire, has successfully led on the development of a new healthier school meals contract. A good number of schools have participated in the food awareness week and all schools took part in the national fruit and vegetable scheme. The Smiling for Life Programme has also raised the issue of healthy eating in the early years setting.

44. There is evidence of good partnership working in relation to health promotion activities around substance misuse and sex and relationships. As part of the Helping Young People through Peer Education initiative, a substance misuse worker targets those at risk of exclusion or who have been excluded. Further substance misuse work is undertaken by the T2 drugs service and no.22 Youth Counselling Service, and is addressed as part of personal social and health education (PSHE) lessons. In relation to alcohol misuse, there is a good range of preventative activity. However, there is a lack of capacity in the alcohol treatment service for young people in the area.

45. There is good provision of leisure facilities in the area and physical activity is promoted by a range of professionals. The Get Active programme targets vulnerable young people to get involved in physical activity. Looked after

children and their carers benefit from free access to the council's leisure facilities. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have increasing access to a range of sporting activities to encourage them to be healthy. For example, the Flying High Club developed in summer 2005, enabled over 50 families and children to access sporting and leisure activities.

46. There is good access for children at the local Accident and Emergency department with a higher than national proportion of children's nurses, and good one hour wait and four hour discharge proportions. The local health services were rated highly by school head teachers in a recent Audit Commission survey.

47. There is good non-specialist (Tier 1) work taking place in supporting the emotional and mental health needs of children and young people. As part of the PSHE curriculum and the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme, teachers, school nurses and youth counsellors provide support to children and young people in dealing with issues of stress, anger management and low self-esteem.

48. Provision of specialist CAMHS is inadequate. There is no comprehensive multi-professional mental health assessment for children and young people who are newly referred to the team. Cases are allocated to team members on the basis of referral information and before a full mental health assessment has been undertaken. The team has no mental health trained social workers, no dedicated Tier 2 workers, and only recently has the art therapist become a fully integrated member of the team. Due to these factors and a lack of capacity, the CAMHS struggles to function as a multi-professional team and clients are often seen on a uni-professional basis only. Although schools reported good and targeted support from CAMHS in dealing with pupils with emotional, behavioural and mental health problems, there is a more sporadic approach to liaison with other partners. Support to the local Youth Offending Team is inadequate. The CAMHS service does not always inform other professionals when cases are closed, which potentially places children at risk.

49. The weaknesses in the CAMHS had been identified on a number of occasions in the past but the response has been inadequate. There is a lack of strategic oversight and leadership, compounded by an insufficient commissioning process. Commissioning is now being addressed by the East Berkshire Working Group but it is unclear if a comprehensive overview of CAMHS will be undertaken and when and how the weaknesses will be addressed.

50. A dedicated health team provides effective health support to looked after children. A comprehensive integrated pathway to address their health needs, which has been audited, demonstrates both high rates of health assessments for looked after children and good health outcomes. Therapeutic services for children who are not permanently placed are very limited, although there is some support provided for their carers.

51. There are comprehensive multi-agency assessment arrangements for children with learning difficulties and disabilities who are referred to the Child Development Centre (CDC). However, services for children who do not access the CDC are not always well co-ordinated. For many, there is no multi-agency care plan or key worker identified. The provision of therapy services for all children in the area is inadequate. This is especially problematic for paediatric occupational therapy where there are significantly fewer numbers of trained therapists than statistical neighbours, though problems also exist in the provision of Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) and physiotherapy. The local authority has tried to address this problem in part by providing funding for some therapy services. For some SALT services, there is a one year waiting list. Parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who were interviewed during the inspection expressed their frustration at the timeliness and quality of the support they received from these services.

Staying safe

52. **The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good.** Children and young people generally feel safe. There is a good range of advice provided to children and young people about key risks to their safety and how to deal with them. This includes the involvement of fire safety, police and community wardens. There is an annual programme offered to schools about road safety. There are useful contributions from other services; there is a comprehensive racial harassment policy, a good domestic violence protocol between police and the social services department that works successfully, and health visitors give preventative information to new parents.

53. There are good systems of referral and assessment for children most in need of protection. Most partners are satisfied with the response from social services and joint working. The number of children on the child protection register is low and there are comprehensive family support services provided to those with the highest needs. There is strong casework and management oversight of work with these children; none are on the register for more than two years, and the number of re-registrations is low, demonstrating effective targeted support to improve their safety and outcomes. However, the measurement of performance indicators in relation to initial assessments is inadequate, due to the fact that the electronic data system records assessments as completed before key components of an assessment, such as liaison with other agencies and case file recording, are concluded.

54. The ACPC's assessment of the safeguarding needs of the wider population is adequate. There is a comprehensive set of child protection procedures which is common to all the unitary authorities in Berkshire. However, the ACPC does not have a satisfactory system for monitoring the overall effectiveness of the child protection system. Disabled children feature less on the child protection register than would be expected. In addition, comparatively few children are on the child protection register for physical and sexual abuse.

55. The ACPC is poorly resourced. It is solely funded by social services and only finances an independent Chair. There is no administrative support or joint budget for training. Membership of the ACPC is adequate with the Youth Offending Team recently becoming represented. Work is ongoing to establish a local safeguarding board.

56. There are high thresholds for convening child protection conferences and the names of almost all children who are subject to such conference are placed in the child protection register. There are good family support services available, both for children on the child protection register, and for those with assessed need.

57. Children and young people included on the child protection register are all allocated to a social worker and benefit from effective multi-agency core groups and reviews. Child protection procedures in schools are good, and all schools have designated teachers who have guidance and training through multi-agency programmes. There are multi-agency public protection arrangements in place. The local authority has a good cross-agency Missing Children's group that monitors children legitimately out of school and those 'lost' from the system.

58. All agencies conduct appropriate CRB and vetting checks although examination of files during fieldwork evidenced a weakness in the recording of operational management decisions when there was a recruitment query in relation to social services appointments.

59. There is a good range of preventative services in place, including Norfolk House, Family Friends, and family group conferencing. There is also short-term support offered in the referral and assessment team and the new family centre, which provides enhanced capacity to support families with younger children at the highest risk. However, services are not based on a clear analysis of the community needs and are not planned and commissioned accordingly.

60. All looked after children have an allocated social worker. There are clear procedures to ensure that they all receive regular visits from social workers and that their care plans are independently reviewed. Approximately one-third are placed outside the Borough. There are examples of extremely good practice where safe and supportive placements have been made, including some notable support to young asylum-seekers.

61. Services for disabled children are provided through a multi-disciplinary team. Those children referred to CDC receive a good service. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities reported that they felt safe in school, and in the area, and that they had people they could talk to in school if they were experiencing difficulties. There are effective arrangements for transition between settings and schools and into adult services for those with complex needs. Most services working with young children who experience learning difficulties and/or disabilities share information effectively but this has not been developed into an overarching strategy for these children.

Enjoying and achieving

62. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good.** Parents and carers are well supported and informed. The council and its partners provide a good range of postal and website information that includes translation facilities. However, most parents get their advice and guidance from the school and are confident with it. Cross-service teams work effectively with other agencies like health and the police to ensure targeted and efficient collaborative support for parents and carers. This is particularly evident in the most deprived areas of the borough, as in the Ellington area. Here, service users are very positive about the good quality and range of opportunities for family learning that enable them to learn with their children and gain qualifications.

63. An effective integrated strategy for the youngest children works well. The borough spends more than similar authorities on provision for early years and the quality of nursery education and child care is good. There are sufficient free nursery and child care places for three and four year olds. Professional services normally act promptly and intervene as early as possible to support young children with special needs. Parents in the Ellington area speak highly of the support they receive from social services, education, and health visitors. Regular links are made with nearby schools to help the transition into mainstream education.

64. School places are sufficient for children who are resident in the borough and, in a small number of schools, a large proportion of places are provided for pupils from adjacent councils. Surplus places are kept to a minimum. Admissions policies provide clear information to parents and carers and the criteria give appropriate priority to the named school for pupils with a statement of special educational need and to looked after children.

65. Most schools, including nursery schools, are good or very good. No schools require special measures or have serious weaknesses and a secondary school with an inadequate sixth form is now making satisfactory progress. Standards of attainment overall are consistently above national averages. The progress of pupils between key stages is generally above national averages. Standards of attainment are consistently broadly in line with statistical neighbours. There is good support for national improvement strategies. Pupils with special educational needs achieve better than similar pupils nationally.

66. The support of the council's inclusion services is good and highly regarded by primary schools in particular. The service has successfully started to use targeted early intervention to help pupils overcome underlying barriers to learning. The EMAS has clear and effective systems for assessing the needs of black and minority ethnic children and young people and for monitoring progress. It provides good training for teachers in meeting need. Although much provision for the most vulnerable children is good, senior managers give

insufficient attention to detailed evaluation of pupil level data about progress and attainment for the most vulnerable and low performing pupils and to the use of that data for focussing intervention and evaluating impact. Link advisers monitor and support the work of all schools and encourage their use of self-evaluation. Some schools indicate that the rigour of the challenge offered by advisers is variable and that they would welcome a more robust approach.

67. Attendance at school is broadly in line with the national average and the support for attendance is good. The education welfare service (EWS), an enhanced and more permanent team, uses a range of well-targeted strategies with schools and families. Recent attendance has risen gradually in primary schools and fallen slightly in secondary schools. The EWS supports children and families, emphasising the outcomes of poor attendance and using prosecution in a minority of cases. Permanent exclusions have been above national averages in primary schools but below the national average in secondary schools. There is a continued reduction in secondary school exclusions, and there have been only two reported permanent exclusions in primary schools in the past two years.

68. Youth work programmes have a strong educational focus. The Youth Service is well targeted and provides a good range of voluntary learning opportunities for young people. Some of these carry accreditation and enable many young people to achieve high standards. There is good advice and guidance for behaviour from the inclusion service. This is effectively used in primary schools and focuses on capacity building for all staff. Some secondary schools are critical of the service although all make some use of it. There is an effective protocol for managed moves between secondary schools that is reducing the number of permanent exclusions.

69. The provision for children out of school is satisfactory. The majority of pupils who are excluded are of secondary age, have complex needs, and are placed in the two PRUs or in settings out of borough. In the PRUs, the curriculum covers the core subjects and a wide range of good activities designed to develop personal and social skills including outdoor activities, work related placements and accredited courses. However, this provision is not available for all. Sampled case files show two young people, one of whom is looked after, have insufficient teaching and a limited range of educational opportunities. For those pupils out of school for reasons of physical or mental health, the tuition service provides good quality and tailored teaching and support in the home or elsewhere.

70. Support for the education of looked after children is good. Recent attainment in gaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades is above national averages but does not meet the borough's Local Public Sector Agreement target. The attendance of looked after children is good. The presence of designated teachers for looked after children in all schools and the support of a senior education welfare officer, senior adviser and educational psychologist ensures a wide range of guidance when needed. Personal education plans are

in place for 96 percent of looked after children but fewer of them are actively involved in the review and revision of these plans when their progress is assessed every six months. All data on the attainment and attendance of the children is monitored and reported to the lead member and the steering group. The role of the council as corporate parent is well managed by the lead member and the Corporate Parenting steering group.

71. Standards of achievement for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good and better than those found nationally and in similar areas. Highly effective psychology and inclusion services support early years' settings and schools and help build their capacity for special educational needs. The special school provides good outreach support to all schools and children in the school have regular opportunities to learn with mainstream pupils. Most children have their needs assessed quickly through timely, effective and appropriate statutory procedures and good guidance to schools and parents. However, for a small minority, the start of procedures for a statutory assessment of need has been too slow. Despite the shared ambition for inclusion, too many children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are educated outside the borough. The inclusion strategy has the potential to enable more children with learning disabilities and/or difficulties to be educated locally, and wherever possible, in mainstream provision.

72. There is satisfactory provision of recreational and leisure activities for children and young people and they feel safe in their communities. Choices have improved in the two towns of Maidenhead and Windsor but smaller communities have less access to provision. Teenagers, and especially girls, would welcome more facilities and the chance to be involved in arts and cultural pursuits whilst recognising that opportunities in music, art and drama are available. Tailored sessions are provided for some pupils with special needs though not all circumstances of need are met, for example for care leavers and children with autistic spectrum disorders. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported to participate in a range of sporting and leisure activities, for example through the Saturday and the Flying High clubs. Looked after children and their carers have free access to leisure facilities.

Making a positive contribution

73. **The overall contribution of services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good.** There is good support for children and young people in developing socially and emotionally. The youth service in particular is successfully developing young people's independence and emotional maturity. Older teenagers are trained to work as peer mentors for younger children, leading to improvements in behaviour. Schools are developing pupils' confidence and self-esteem, and encourage children to value cultural diversity. There is good access to professional counselling services. Young mothers receive advice and support.

74. The opportunities for children and young people to participate in decision-making have developed well over the last five years and are now good. The children and young people's strategic partnership prioritises the development of ways to hear first-hand from children and young people. Young people contributed to the consultation on the vision and values for children's services. The youth forum was established in 2003 and is represented at the national youth parliament by the local elected member. Participation in the youth forum has increased, but further strategies are being developed to achieve wider participation.

75. 'Participation Champions' have been identified in partner agencies and council services to ensure that channels are set up to enable all children and young people to make their views heard. Young people are also encouraged and enabled to support the community through programmes such as millennium volunteers, the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme and a peer-led drugs education scheme, which trains young volunteers.

76. There are opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to influence decision-making about service design and provision, but these are not yet fully developed. Arrangements for young people who are looked after to give their views have improved, but are not yet completely effective. Young people are made aware of the advocacy service to assist them in their reviews, but access to the service is currently restricted owing to staff vacancies.

77. There is much effective, multi-agency action to reduce anti-social behaviour by children and young people and to prevent them offending. The youth service manages well-targeted projects to provide positive diversionary activities in potential 'hot spots'. These activities are linked to community safety priorities. A mobile youth project worked successfully with young people, including some from the traveller community, in a rural area where facilities and access to transport are limited.

78. There is good and co-ordinated action between agencies, to prevent offending by young people. Restorative justice programmes, including family conferences, are being developed, and young people and their parents are positive about the support received from the youth offending team. There has been a reduction in the numbers of young people who offend, and in the overall number of offences. Work with children and young people who offend is generally good, although the re-offending rates remain a matter for concern.

79. Many services demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusion. There is a satisfactory range of leisure and recreational provision for children and young people with disabilities. In addition to some specialist provision in youth clubs and play schemes, there are holiday activities for 8-13 year olds which engage many children with particular needs, although not all are disabled. Whilst the disabled children's team provides weekend, holiday and overnight respite care for children with disabilities in residential units, there is not enough extended

day care and respite care provision available for all such children and young people who require it. The local authority, in its self-assessment, has identified the need to further develop provision.

Achieving economic well being

80. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is adequate.** Partners provide much good support to families. There is good provision of childcare places and after-school clubs are widely available. There is some excellent practice in adult and family learning, such as that in the Ellington area. Women from Asian communities in particular are benefiting from these opportunities, which not only improve their employment prospects, but also support the educational development of children and enhance community life. Teenage mothers receive support in considering their career options and job-seeking skills. The proportion of these mothers in education, employment or training is average, although the Care 2 Learn programme has low numbers participating.

81. There is a strong programme to develop community cohesion, which links in closely to safety strategies. Successful community action has improved the environment in particular areas by removing litter and graffiti, and relationships between young people and other members of the community have been improved with the help of the youth service.

82. Affordable housing remains in short supply in the borough although the authority has made satisfactory progress in building new affordable housing. Families are not housed in bed and breakfast accommodation or hostels. Accommodation is provided for vulnerable groups such as young people leaving care, although there is insufficient housing available for substance misusers. The provision of housing benefit is slow.

83. Young people receive some good support to prepare for working life. There are high participation rates in education post-16 and the numbers of young people in education, training or employment are consistently high. The numbers of young people who are not in education, training or employment more than meets the target for Berkshire, and there are few whose destinations are not known. There are good participation rates for young people aged over 16 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Young people leaving care are successfully motivated to enter and maintain education or employment in many cases.

84. The Connexions service provides effective support for young people, including those who are vulnerable, often in collaboration with the youth service. The majority of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported in their transition into school and from secondary school into education, training and employment. Careers events have included special conferences for young people with sensory impairments. Connexions advice and support is valued in many cases. Multi-agency working ensures effective transition arrangements for care leavers and for learners with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities, although for a small minority of young people support for their transition into employment, education and training has been unsatisfactory.

85. The education business partnership provides a good range of work experience and work-related enrichment activities for young people in schools. Disaffected and disengaged young people develop work-related skills through successful projects, for example, in construction, motor vehicle engineering and work placements with mentoring support. Other targeted projects include information technology provision for minority ethnic young women. A work experience scheme within the partnership organisations has started to offer opportunities for young people leaving care, leading to positive outcomes for those taking part.

86. The planning and coordination of 14-19 education and training in the borough is satisfactory. Collaboration between LSC Berkshire and the local authority is good, leading to a strategic framework for the development of 14-19 provision. Priorities for action have been identified, but targets have yet to be agreed with schools and colleges. There are some well-established sixth-form consortia arrangements. However, the 14-19 strategic group has not yet secured the full commitment of all schools to a shared responsibility for planning and monitoring 14-19 provision borough-wide. However, not all pupils receive impartial information, advice and guidance from their schools on the full range of learning opportunities available outside their own sixth forms. There is no borough-wide prospectus for post-16 provision. Involvement of young offenders in education, employment or training has improved to 80%, although this is below target.

87. There has been limited progress in the implementation of the 14-19 strategy. Progress has been made in collaborative working between schools and colleges through the development of the increased flexibility programme of vocational courses for 14-16 year olds, although options within the scheme are limited. There is insufficient provision at levels below advanced level and too few opportunities for work-based learning. The E2E programme is small and there are currently no locally-based private training providers of work-based learning.

88. An above average proportion of young people resident in the borough achieve a level 2 equivalent qualification by age 19, including those who have attended colleges and schools in neighbouring authorities. GCE/VCE AS/A level point scores are below average compared to those of similar authorities, although learners in school sixth forms generally achieve in line with or better than expected from their prior qualifications. Success rates for borough residents attending one local college in 2004 were above national averages, whilst those attending another were less successful at foundation and advanced levels. The apprentice framework completion rate for work-based learners is poor, although there has been recent improvement.

Service management

89. **The management of services for children and young people is adequate. The capacity to improve further is adequate.** Ambition for children and young people in the area is adequate. There is strong commitment within the council and amongst partners to the delivery of the new children's agenda. The Children and Young People's Strategic Board is appropriately established and partners are active. There is a clear project plan to guide the process. Development of the Children and Young People's Plan is at an early stage. The Leader is taking personal oversight of the development of the Children's Services agenda. There are good relations between the lead members for social services and housing and for education, which ensure close working. Governance and formal relationships with partners are yet to be agreed, and there is, as yet, no coherent strategic approach.

90. Prioritisation is adequate. Although the council has a well-defined approach to setting priorities at a corporate level and in social services, a lack of specific desired outcomes for children and young people in corporate plans means that there is not always clear prioritisation and focus for education. Children and young people hardly feature in the council's partnership outcome improvement plan for 2005, although there are a number of key actions in the council's current corporate improvement plan to deliver the new children's agenda. The Council's self-assessment for the Joint Area Review is optimistic but does not identify some key areas for development.

91. The council's capacity to deliver improvement for children and young people is adequate. A great deal of progress has been made in the last two years in social services to improve. Steps have been taken to make the council an attractive place in which to work. Education and social services are almost fully staffed. Staff turnover in social services is low and there are few vacancies in schools. Work force planning for the new children's agenda has started in both education and social services. However, the capacity to improve is limited by, for example, a lack of comprehensive needs analyses, particularly in education, and by an absence of a current coherent strategic approach to the future.

92. There is commitment within the council to partnership working and most partners are enthusiastically engaged. The local preventative strategy is a firm base from which to deliver children's services. However, the ACPC does not have adequate systems in place to monitor the overall effectiveness of child protection processes. Primary schools rate the council highly. However, some secondary schools have expressed strong concerns about their operational and strategic working with the council, including the development of the 14-19 agenda. Officers are working with secondary schools to ensure that they play a key part in agreeing arrangements for the new children's services. Effective working with health is established and this, alongside the already existing close working with the police, is greatly valued. Partners have also worked well together to produce an effective local preventative strategy.

93. Overall, the council delivers adequate value for money in children's services. Audit Commission figures show that the amount spent on education is above average compared to similar councils. Attainment is generally broadly in line with similar councils. The council's spend on children and families social services is low compared to statistical neighbours, while provision overall in children's social services is good. Low spending on social services means that some important areas, for example, the ACPC, are under resourced.

94. Financial management is adequate. There are some anticipated overspends in social services and education at the end of this financial year but reasons are known. The council is engaging with schools, for example, about possible solutions in some areas. School balances have reduced significantly in the past year but this masks the high percentage of secondary schools with deficits and loans. Expenditure on special educational needs has increased by nearly 28% over the last two years partly because of increases in, for example, out of borough residential placements. The rate of increase is now declining, with an estimated rise of 6% in 2005/06. A recent consultation paper has been developed by the authority and head teacher representatives, which has clear proposals for delegation of funding for special educational needs to meet the needs of more pupils with learning difficulties in mainstream schools without the requirement for a statement. The resulting redistribution of resources to borough schools is a sound plan, with an impact on further improvement of provision for special educational needs anticipated in the medium term.

95. Commissioning arrangements are inadequate across children's services. A paper on joint procurement focuses on processes rather than improved outcomes for children and young people, with no specific evaluation arrangements to measure impact. Consequently, improved outcomes for young people and value for money through pooled budgets are uncertain. Agreements on the joint funding with health, of the most complex cases, are weak.

96. Performance management is adequate. Activity to improve the outcomes for children and young people is not always explicitly needs led and there is no consistent management process to ensure that learning from projects is systematically captured and fed through into service development. Quality assurance and target setting in most parts of social services is good and has led to real improvements in services. The process of monitoring individual services in education is developing. The education department effectively uses corporate risk management processes for most projects and action planning, and is actively developing its approach in other areas of risk assessment and management. Service and resource planning are not always linked closely enough to demonstrate that resources match identified priorities for service delivery.

97. Scrutiny and challenge in the council as a whole are not effective. However, the corporate leadership plays an active role in overseeing the improvement of social services. Individual lead members are well regarded and there is active member involvement in corporate parenting responsibilities for looked after children.

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

1. Outcomes for many children and young people in Windsor and Maidenhead are good. Children's services across the council are good. Many children are in good health, safe and achieve well. The Council and its partners offer a range of opportunities for many young people to make a positive contribution and they are helped to achieve economic well being.

2. A comprehensive children's and young people's strategic partnership is in place, and there is strong partnership working with health in particular. Services for children within the Council are delivered through the Directorates of Social Care and Housing, and Education. The Youth Service is located in the Leisure, Cultural and Property Services Directorate. The Council plans to appoint a Director of Children Services by April 2006. Discussions regarding a children's trust are at an early stage. It is likely that this will centre on the delivery of services to disabled children in the first instance.

3. Operational services are in the main effective and well managed, with good monitoring systems in some areas. There is not yet a shared vision between services that will focus on the outcomes for all children and young people. There are individual examples of good knowledge of what young people need, for example in the youth service, but they are not yet fully incorporated into an overall, prioritised, plan across all services.

4. The work of all local services in ensuring that children and young people are healthy is adequate, with some strengths. Comprehensive universal services are in place and these focus well on those children and young people whose needs are most pressing. There is good health promotion work being done within schools and the community. However, it is harder to access specialist mental health services and there is not enough provision of all therapy services for children.

5. The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good. Children reported that they generally feel safe in their community and there is a good response from schools towards bullying. There are clear processes within social services for responding to child protection referrals and a good range of family support services for children in need. All children on the child protection register have an allocated social worker. However, the Area Child Protection Committee is under-resourced and its knowledge of the safeguarding needs of the wider population is inadequate.

6. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good. The Council's inclusion support services and Ethnic Minority Achievement Service are good and they impact on targeted groups and individual pupils. The Youth Service provides a good range of voluntary learning opportunities. There are no schools in special measure or with serious weaknesses and the one school with an inadequate sixth form is receiving satisfactory support. The provision of services for pupils educated out of school is variable, although the majority receive levels of education that match their needs. There are a small number of children and young people who do not receive the amount and suitability of learning experiences that they are assessed as needing.

7. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. Young people are encouraged to behave responsibly, help each other and contribute to the community through work in schools, youth clubs and other settings. The Council and its partners are making good progress with developing opportunities for young people to affect decision-making, though there are still limited opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

8. The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is adequate. There is a range of childcare, adult and community learning opportunities to enable families to improve economic well-being. Vulnerable families and young people are appropriately housed. There is a high participation rate in education by 16-18 year olds, and there are high numbers of young people in education, employment or training. However, limited progress has been made in implementing the 14-19 strategy. The 14-19 strategic group has not yet secured the full commitment of all schools to a shared responsibility for planning and monitoring 14-19 provision borough-wide. Some aspects of provision for 14-19 year olds are under developed.