

Joint area review

St Helens Children's Services Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

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

Introduction	2
Context	2
Main findings	3
Grades	4
Recommendations	4
Areas for investigation through fieldwork during the joint area review	
1. Safeguarding	6
2. Looked after children and young people	10
3. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	12
4. Additional investigations	15
5. Service management	18
6. Capacity to improve	18
Annex A: The annual performance assessment letter	23
Annex B: Summary of the Enhanced Youth Inspection Report	24
Annex C: Children and young people's section of the corporate assessment report	26
Annex D: Summary of joint area review and annual performance assessment arrangements	29

Introduction

1. The most recent annual performance assessment for St Helens judged the council's children's services as good, 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.
3. The following investigation was also carried out:
 - the quality of service provided and the outcomes achieved by children and young people using the Child and Adolescent emotional well-being and Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Context

4. The borough of St Helens includes the town of St Helens and several small communities. St Helens Council is the largest employer. The coal mining, glass and chemical industries, part of St Helens' history during the industrial revolution, have declined in importance with over 30,000 jobs lost in the late 1980s. There has been, however, significant regeneration activity over the last 20 years. Recent developments have been dramatic, with derelict land brought back into use and job losses in traditional industries balanced by significant inward investment. Employment growth, at 4.5% in 2006-07, is much faster than regional and national rates over the same period, while unemployment has fallen to 3%. However, localised pockets of severe deprivation remain, with a number of neighbourhoods ranked amongst the most deprived 5% nationally. Youth unemployment for the 16-24 age range is lower than for councils in Merseyside and the North West. In schools, the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above that found nationally.

5. The overall population is just over 177,000 of whom 44,100 are aged under 19. The school population is 26,642. The percentage of children and young people of Black and minority ethnic heritage, at 2.9%, is well below average, although in recent years there has been an increase of migrant workers from Eastern Europe. The travelling communities are the largest ethnic minority population in St Helens.

6. Pre-16 education comprises: 51 private or voluntary early years settings, eight full service children's centres and four smaller centres giving full borough coverage, one nursery school and 31 maintained nursery units in primary

schools, 54 primary schools, 10 secondary schools, three special schools and three pupil referral units.

7. Post-16 education is provided by: five schools sixth forms, one college of further education (St Helens College), one Sixth Form College (Carmel College) and two main work-based training providers, St Helens College and the Chamber of Commerce which also manage Entry to Employment through the local Learning and Skills Council providing just over 300 places.

8. Adult community-based learning, including family learning, is primarily provided by the local authority through its Adult and Community Learning Service, working in partnership with a wide range of agencies and organisations. The community and voluntary sector is developing an increasing role in borough provision.

9. Primary health care is provided by Halton and St Helens Primary Care Trust.

10. Acute hospital services are mainly provided by the St Helens and Knowsley Hospital NHS Trust.

11. Mental health services are mainly provided by the Five Boroughs Partnership NHS Trust and St Helens CAMHS with additional provision available in neighbouring authorities, including The Royal Liverpool Children's NHS Trust.

12. Children's social care services are provided through: 131 foster carers, one children's residential care home, one short-break unit, three children and family teams, one Family Support team, one looked after children team, one Children with Disabilities team, one Fostering team, one Adoption and Permanency team, one Young People's team and one emergency duty team providing out-of-hours contact in partnership with Halton Council.

13. There are two young offenders institutions in the area. Services to children and young people who are at risk of offending or have offended are provided through the Youth Offending Service.

Main findings

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

- Agencies work effectively together to safeguard children and young people, although in the Youth Offending Service there are concerns in respect of assessment and safeguarding processes.
- Strong inter-agency working across education, social care, health and the voluntary sector ensures that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in school and in their personal development. Further delegation of resources is required to ensure that schools intervene early to support pupils as

soon as they need it. The procurement of advocacy support needs improvement.

- The contribution of local services for looked after children is good and the council fulfils its corporate parenting responsibilities very well. Health and educational outcomes are generally good and improving. The numbers of looked after children, albeit diminishing, remain too high.
- Provision for children and young people requiring mental health services is good. The comprehensive CAMHS strategy is progressing well and access to services is improving. However, access to care pathways for some young people, particularly those aged 16 and over and those who offend, is limited.
- Service management is good. Partnership working is excellent and demonstrates outstanding ambitions and prioritisation. Performance data are used well to drive improvements, although quality assurance procedures in the Youth Offending Service and the Youth Service are not sufficiently effective. There is excellent financial management, effective senior leadership and good workforce planning, which means the area has excellent capacity to improve.

Grades

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

	Local services overall
Safeguarding	3
Looked after children	3
Learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Service management	3
Capacity to improve	4

Recommendations

For immediate action

The local partnership should:

- ensure that an appropriate way is found for the successful dissemination of the findings of this report to children and young people in the area.

For action over the next six months

The local partnership should:

- develop a formalised advocacy support service for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families
- strengthen the assessment and safeguarding processes in the Youth Offending Service.

For action in the longer term

The local partnership should:

- improve preventative services to support families and reduce the number of looked after children
- increase further the delegation of resources to develop schools' flexibility and autonomy so that schools can intervene promptly to support children and young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- improve care pathways in CAMHS for all young people, particularly those aged 16-18 and for young people who offend.

Equality and diversity

15. The strategic commitment to raising awareness of equality and diversity issues across the partnership is very strong, with significant actions taken to support the most vulnerable minority groups. Young people seen during youth work activities displayed much tolerance, understanding and sensitivity towards others. Strengths include the work done with schools and the support given to children and young people from travelling communities and the good partnership with neighbouring authorities to ensure that unaccompanied asylum seekers access services if these cannot be provided in St Helens. There has been a good response to the increasing diversity in the local population, and to help young people from Eastern Europe settle into education and achieve well. The Polish community has good access to language classes. A range of information is available in the most relevant community languages. Children and young people have lessons which address issues of diversity, including race and homophobia. There is considerable good practice in addressing racism but the reporting of racist incidents is not precise enough to inform strategies and take positive action. Educational outcomes are monitored rigorously to ensure that children and young people from Black and minority ethnic groups and young people with a statement of special educational needs enjoy their education, achieve as highly as possible and make good progress. The evaluation of the achievement of young people in receipt of free school meals requires further development to support the partnership's drive in alleviating

the impact of poverty. Young people in care are given placements that are, as far as possible, sensitive to their ethnicity and faith.

Safeguarding



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Strong multi-agency partnerships deliver a range of effective preventative services.</p> <p>A very effective Healthy Schools programme.</p> <p>The support to families where domestic violence is an issue.</p> <p>The leadership and vision of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).</p> <p>Strong multi-agency understanding of safeguarding.</p> <p>Excellent multi-agency training.</p> <p>Good monitoring of lessons learned through serious case reviews.</p> <p>Good performance management of child protection processes.</p>	<p>Concerns in assessment and safeguarding processes in the Youth Offending Service.</p> <p>The high number of first time entrants to the youth justice system.</p>

17. Safeguarding has a high priority across all agencies including the voluntary and community sector. There is a shared understanding that the focus of safeguarding is wider than formal child protection and strong commitment to multi-agency working. There are some concerns in safeguarding and assessment in the Youth Offending Service but these concerns were not found in services for all children and young people, where practice is good and assessment well managed. Safeguarding procedures in youth work enable the Youth Service to contribute effectively to the community services safety agenda.

18. The 2006 and 2007 annual performance assessments judged the council's contribution to safeguarding to be good and practice continues to improve. All partners ensure that services and actions to safeguard children and young people take high priority. Effective road safety measures have resulted in a reduction in the number of children and young people killed or seriously injured on the roads, from 15 in 2005 to nine in 2006. There is targeted work within schools by the Road Safety and Awareness Team and this includes the development of school travel plans, child pedestrian training schemes, particularly targeting boys and cycle training. Most children and young people report that they feel safe in their school and local communities. School inspections are positive and judge most schools as good or outstanding at ensuring that learners adopt safe practices.

19. The promotion of healthy lifestyles in schools is excellent and the council has achieved Beacon status for its Healthy Schools programme. All primary schools are undertaking effective work through the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme (SEAL) and this is having a positive impact in helping children and young people and their families cope with issues of stress and bullying. All schools have anti-bullying policies and procedures that are being effectively applied. Where bullying is identified, effective liaison with school police officers and social workers ensures that children and young people and their families receive timely support. Further work is being undertaken to establish baseline figures to set appropriate targets to reduce bullying in the future. In some centres, the Youth Service provides excellent opportunities for young people to consider the consequences of poor health practices, such as drinking and use of drugs.

20. The mental health needs of children and young people are well promoted through pastoral and nursing staff in schools, who offer a weekly confidential drop-in service. Particular aspects of mental health, for example eating disorders and self-harm, are widely understood by staff and young people are encouraged to raise concerns. KOOOTH.com, an on-line counselling service, is beginning to have a positive impact, particularly for those young people who are being bullied or feel depressed. Good progress has been made towards developing CAMHS. However, some young people who have ongoing mental health issues, including those who offend, have difficulty in accessing a timely service.

21. The council works effectively with its partners to promote early intervention and support to children and families. This, together with robust monitoring of safeguarding arrangements and recent investment in family support services, has resulted in fewer children becoming the subject of a child protection plan. Although numbers, at 26.7 per 10,000, are slightly above the average of similar councils, thresholds are clearly understood, applied and monitored across the agencies and the number on the child protection register is now much more stable. All children on the child protection register have an allocated social worker and cases are reviewed within the appropriate timescales. Duty, referral and assessment arrangements are well managed.

Very good improvements have been made in the timeliness of both initial and core assessments, and performance is now considerably better than is the case nationally and in similar councils. Assessments are of good quality and child protection plans are clear and focused. Review conferences and core group meetings are held within timescales and plans are rigorously monitored by the independent reviewing officers as well as social care team managers. Parental involvement at these meetings is good. All social work staff receive regular supervision and have access to excellent multi-agency training opportunities. Auditing of case files and management oversight of decisions is robust, although the recording of these activities is not as systematic as it could be. There has been work undertaken to identify those children who are privately fostered and all of these children are allocated to a social worker.

22. The 2006 and 2007 annual performance assessments highlighted the high numbers of looked after children as an area of concern. Better coordinated preventative services and the development of a new family support service in April 2007, accessible to parents over extended hours, are beginning to have a positive impact. Since April 2007, there has been a reduction in the number of children and young people entering care and there are indications that this will continue.

23. The wide range of preventative services available is accessed by clear referral and assessment processes. The Common Assessment Framework is well used by health and education partners across agencies and is underpinned by effective training and regular monitoring. Parents using the children's centres speak positively of the range of support and activities that are available to them and their children and of the positive impact that the service has on their children, on their own parenting skills and on their emotional well-being. The co-location of family support services with the Fire and Rescue Service has led to some innovative work with young people. In addition, the Fire Service offers an excellent range of support to schools and neighbourhoods, which has effectively engaged some difficult young people involved in fire setting.

24. Targeted multi-agency intervention ensures that children at risk of anti-social behaviour are provided with support and activities to improve their behaviour. Close monitoring of young people identified as being at risk of anti-social behaviour is undertaken at neighbourhood action group meetings and, where necessary, acceptable behaviour contracts are used to help children and young people improve their attitudes. Anti-social behaviour has reduced significantly in the last year. However, despite prevention services covering a good range of needs and age groups, there are still high levels of first-time entrants to the youth justice system. Maintaining school attendance is a high priority and most schools have an attendance officer in place who works alongside the education welfare service. Where necessary, enforcement notices are served on parents. A number of projects support children and young people who are excluded. For example, a motor project, called STAMP, runs for 12 weeks providing young people with an accredited award. Arrangements

between agencies for tracking children missing from care and education work effectively.

25. The LSCB has developed well. It is providing clear leadership and is making progress in driving forward not only the core business of child protection but the broader remit of safeguarding across the council and the local area. For example, work has been undertaken to identify a local authority designated officer who liaises with acute hospitals to ensure that allegations against staff are appropriately dealt with. There are good arrangements for feedback to the LSCB and effective links to all the partnership boards. Action plans from serious case reviews are effectively monitored and well implemented, for example the development of the dangerous dog protocol.

26. Dealing with domestic violence remains a high priority and an effective and well co-ordinated multi-agency approach is taken with families and children who are affected. A social worker is co-located with police officers and offers a quick response to child protection concerns. Support and protection is offered to try and keep families in their own homes. There is a well-used independent advocate for victims of domestic violence and this has had a real impact, with higher numbers of prosecutions followed through by the police and better support for the victims.

27. Thorough vetting procedures are in place across agencies for all front-line staff who work with children and young people, including all the necessary statutory checks. All settings and services for children and young people have a designated trained member of staff for safeguarding. A clear complaints process ensures that any complaints against staff are dealt with promptly. Effective joint information sharing and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements ensure that high-risk offenders living in the community are known to all agencies and issues raised are responded to appropriately.

28. There are specific concerns about the assessment and safeguarding of young people who offend and those who are subject to custodial sentences. These concerns are detailed in the Youth Offending Service report. For example, a number of assessments are not completed to high standards and within required timescales and there is a lack of provision and coordination of physical and mental health services. Liaison with children's services is largely good. Work with young people on substance misuse and support for their education, training and employment are good but, nevertheless, too many school-aged children are not receiving 25-hours of educational provision per week. Returning children and young people to the community following custodial sentences is undertaken in a planned and co-ordinated way and suitable support mechanisms are in place.

Looked after children and young people



29. The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people is good.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>The council is a very good corporate parent.</p> <p>Placements are very stable and placement choice good.</p> <p>The health of looked after children is well safeguarded.</p> <p>Systems for assessment, planning, intervention and review are safe and well monitored.</p> <p>Looked after children contribute very effectively to decision making and shaping service provision.</p> <p>Transition planning and leaving care services are good.</p>	<p>There is a high number of children in the looked after system.</p> <p>The educational attainment of young people in care, whilst good for many, remains below that of their peers.</p>

30. Children and young people in care live in safe and stable placements and their welfare and achievement is of primary concern to the council and its partners. Health promotion and surveillance is good and educational performance is improving. The involvement of young people in shaping services is highly evident and ensuring a good quality of life for all looked after children is a council priority.

31. The number of children and young people entering the looked after system has been steadily rising over a four-year period up to April 2007. The reasons for this are complex and include the increased incidence of domestic violence and substance misuse in families. The development of a comprehensive support service which assists families in their community and prevents admissions to the looked after system has started to have an impact. This newly developed service is ensuring effective coordination with universal support services; numbers of looked after children have started to fall slowly, from 319 to 313 over a six-month period.

32. The council is committed to being a very good corporate parent and members of the council, officers and young people meet together regularly to work through issues of concern. The voice of young people is prominent in the workings of the council, evidenced by their inclusion on a number of interview panels for key staff appointments.

33. Placement choice is good and the council has invested heavily to support the child placement strategy. The placements of children from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds are handled particularly sensitively, aiming to reflect their cultural and faith needs and ensure relevant support. The number of young people in residential care has dropped as a direct result of the council's successful recruitment of family carers, which exceeds performance nationally and locally. The number of children looked after in family placements, or placed for adoption, has increased steadily over recent years but remains lower than in similar councils. The level of placement stability is very good and very few children experience more than three moves of placement in one year.

34. The health needs of looked after children are met well. Sexual health needs are met through a number of outlets utilising innovative schemes such as "Clinic in a Box". A designated doctor and nurse are identified for looked after children and a specialist nurse provides effective links into general health services and heads up programmes of health promotion, such as healthy eating and promoting sexual health. Care leavers living in the community have regular weight checks carried out by the nurse and healthy eating is promoted, as evidenced through the development of the "*Best ever treats and eats*" cookbook designed and produced by young care leavers. The council's performance on ensuring annual health checks is very good, with 88% completed, which is higher than in comparable council's and the national average. CAMHS prioritise looked after children and both primary care trust and social care staff confirm that there are no difficulties accessing CAMHS appointments for looked after children.

35. The educational attainment of looked after children and young people is improving and a senior manager is charged with championing the benefits of attending and doing well at school. The council and partners work very effectively with schools to ensure that all looked after children and young people, including those studying out-of-borough, are given high priority and receive quality support. Their results and achievement are tracked rigorously. Schools have direct access to specialist staff. Designated teachers are confident in their role and establish good links with social workers and learning mentors. Consequently, school attendance of looked after children has risen consistently and is now better than in comparable councils and the national picture. A high proportion of looked after children and young people have special educational and emotional needs. Over the last three years the number of those achieving well in their primary schools and, at age 16, in their GCSE or other equivalent accreditation has risen and is now above the performance of comparable councils and the national average. Although below those of all young people of

the same age in St Helens, the target set for results at the highest GCSE grades (A*-C) was exceeded in 2007 and good support is provided for looked after children who are gifted or have a special talent. Very good support is given to ensure that young people follow suitable learning pathways. The number taking examinations has nearly doubled over the last year and is considerably above the national average and that of comparable councils. The area is far from complacent and has identified improving attendance and raising achievement at all levels as a key priority for action in relevant plans.

36. The quality of care planning is good and staff are clear about national and local priorities in relation to the completion of assessments, plans and reviews. The organisational structure of the children's service aids this process. For example, young people move to the specialist Young People's Team at age 15, where pathway plans are completed to ensure a smooth transition through leaving care and into adult life. Virtually all looked after children have a qualified social worker allocated to their case, which is above the level achieved both nationally and by comparable councils. Performance management systems to ensure that children receive statutory visits to their placements are in place and are robust. The timeliness of reviews is very good with 98% of children receiving a review within recommended timescales, a performance which is considerably better than the national average and that of comparable councils. High levels of looked after children attend their reviews, reflecting a strong council commitment to children's involvement.

37. Young people who are looked after have access to a range of opportunities to boost their self-esteem and enrich their lives, for example free leisure passes for care leavers allow good access to swimming facilities. The involvement and inclusion of young people is a key feature which has been recognised through national awards, being finalists in the Community Care Awards 2006 and the Children and Young People Services Awards 2007.

38. There is an effective advocacy service for looked after young people, commissioned from a national voluntary organisation, which operates effectively. The complaints system operates well and evidence shows that service improvement has taken place following complaints.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



39. **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>Strong commitment to inclusion and effective partnership working.</p> <p>Good monitoring of the progress and personal development of children and young people.</p> <p>Support for behaviour and the use of a sport and physical education programme to motivate young people with behaviour difficulties.</p> <p>The increased flexibility that families have to support children and young people through the use of direct payments.</p> <p>The timeliness of statements of special educational need.</p> <p>Work to involve young people themselves in decisions on their own care and on general issues.</p> <p>Good transition to a wide range of post-16 educational opportunities.</p>	<p>The arrangements for advocacy.</p> <p>The Enhanced School Action Plus arrangements do not maximise flexibility or promote early intervention sufficiently.</p>

40. Support for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Inter-agency working is strong, and good partnerships, including the voluntary and community sector, have led to improving outcomes for these children. They are prioritised by health, social care and education services and this good practice has led to services and provision where inclusion is strong. The increasing percentage of young people with severe and more complex needs fully justifies the decision to retain capacity in special schools, with the council securing greater inclusion in mainstream schools for those with less complex needs.

41. The 2007 annual performance assessment draws attention to the need to improve transition planning for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and to reduce the number not in education, employment or training. The area has responded swiftly to these issues, with good progress made from the relevant partnership board on a new transition policy. A recent initiative, funded by the Learning and Skills Council, draws on European Social Fund resources and promotes routes to employment. This is at an early stage and it is too early to judge outcomes.

42. The needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified at an early stage. The good support offered to babies and very young children by specialist workers linked to health, social care and education services is very effective and much appreciated by parents. Integration between professionals working with these very young children is good, not least through good provision at the STAR centre, where the work engages and informs parents very well. The Common Assessment Framework is implemented by staff who work well together, share information effectively and provision is generally in place before the children start nursery education. Assessment of the needs of these young people is strong.

43. Where appropriate, statements of special educational needs are issued in a very timely manner and the number has dropped from 3.4% of the pupil population in 2004 to 2.6% in 2007. Largely, this is because of the locally devised Enhanced School Action Plus arrangement. This system generally ensures that pupils' needs are not delayed by the time it takes to prepare a statement. It does not, however, provide sufficient flexibility for schools or support strongly enough the development of their autonomy and ownership of special educational needs' issues.

44. Good monitoring of the progress children and young people make in their education enables effective support and challenge where needed. Schools value the good support that they receive from support services, such as educational psychology and the Sensory Impaired Team. Pupils make good progress in mainstream schools and very good progress in special schools. For example, in 31 primary schools inspected recently, 80% showed that pupils with special educational needs were making good or better progress compared with 73% in similar councils. The special school inspected recently was outstanding. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities spoken to during this review were enthusiastically supportive of the education that they receive. Support for children and young people who have behaviour issues is good, particularly through the multi-agency Behavioural and Emotional Support Team. This has led to low exclusion rates with good use of the pupil referral units working with young people on a part-time basis to promote their prompt return and full inclusion into mainstream education. There were no permanent exclusions from primary schools or special schools in 2006/07.

45. Access to CAMHS is prioritised and the good development of a comprehensive service secures timely assessment of needs. Children and young people with challenging behaviour spoke enthusiastically about a pilot programme aiming to engage them with work on literacy and numeracy through sport and physical education activities. The work on supporting sport for talented young people who have disabilities is good.

46. From inconsistent support some two years ago, engagement and support from social care staff is much improved and this change is recognised by schools. It has led to much more rapid responses to referrals and more effective interventions. Direct payments are used well with about 30 families

and the flexibility that this offers is valued by them. Respite care is of good quality and the area is now seeking to enhance this provision further through recruiting more short-term respite foster carers, with three already in place. Children and their families are supported well in voicing any concerns they may have and in contributing to assessments through parent partnership but more formal advocacy arrangements for this group of children and young people are not well developed. There are good examples of the voice of young people being sought and listened to. For example, young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were given relevant training and support to be involved fully in the recruitment of an Assistant Director. They are well supported in volunteering activities and participating in the Youth Council and have access to a good range of leisure and play opportunities, with good contribution from the voluntary sector, Barnardos in particular, and good transport arrangements facilitate participation.

47. Children with complex needs are well supported in their transition to adult life. The area has recognised the importance of high-quality transition for all and a very new transition policy, developed through multi-agency working, for all young people with learning disabilities and/or disabilities is in place, although not yet formally approved by the council and partners. Fewer young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities had a transition plan at age 14 than was the case nationally, although the percentage has been growing year-on-year and all young people now have a plan in place or it is in the process of being developed. There is good work on supporting transition to post-16 education and training provision, not least through Connexions. There are some good post-16 educational opportunities, mostly at St Helens College, where inclusion is a strength.

Other issues identified for further investigation

Child and Adolescent emotional well-being and Mental Health Services

48. **The contribution of all services to the outcomes for children and young people using the Child and Adolescent emotional well-being and Mental Health Services is good.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good partnership working, with strong financial commitments to a CAMHS strategy and action plan for 2007-10.</p> <p>Robust training framework for all staff in awareness of mental health issues.</p>	<p>Insufficient access to care pathways for young people who have ongoing mental health issues but do not trigger specialist services, especially for those aged 16 to 18.</p> <p>Insufficient physical and mental health support for young people who offend.</p>

<p>Effective support for children looked after and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from a dedicated CAMHS team and good transition support to adult services.</p> <p>Timely access for children and young people who require counselling services from a web-based service and face to face.</p> <p>Good consultation with children and young people in development of the emotional and well-being strategy.</p>	
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49. The CAMHS partnership provides effective service management and leadership to deliver a focused strategy and action plans. The 2006 and 2007 annual performance assessments judged the progress towards a comprehensive CAMHS as good and this is supported by the findings in this joint area review investigation. The partnership is making good progress to address the care pathways of CAMHS, and service redesign is beginning to bring a consistent approach to care delivery throughout the borough for all age groups.

50. Children and young people have access to good, timely screenings and assessments undertaken by the Tier 3¹ CAMHS team. The Five Boroughs Partnership NHS Trust, which is commissioned to provide Tier 3 services for children and young people aged 0 to 16 years, compares favourably with the England average for length of waiting times, below four and 26 weeks at 56.7% and 90.6% respectively for 2006. Waiting times for 2007 in St Helens indicate that no child or young person is waiting longer than 16 weeks for an appointment for screening and assessment. The CAMHS team has implemented the national system called Choice and Partnership Approach and this is providing good, timely initial contacts for children and families.

51. The Children and Young People's Plan 2006 identified improvement of mental health as one of the key priority areas for the borough. Good consultation events with parents, children and young people have informed a robust strategy and action plan for the development of emotional well-being and mental health services for 2007-10. There has been good progress in development of CAMHS at Tiers 1 and 2. A training framework is in place, aimed at delivering a consistent approach to mental health awareness and

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

intervention training. This work is enabling staff to provide early detection, good intervention and support to all children and young people in the borough. The training coordinator from Barnardos is providing effective outreach work in schools, social services and health.

52. Children and young people have access to a good range of services that support their emotional and wellbeing needs. There is good support and early intervention for behavioural problems in schools, SEAL has been delivered to staff in 17 primary schools and commencement of SEAL in secondary schools is on target. In 2007, the council was awarded Beacon status and was scored as excellent for the Healthy Schools programme. Weekly drop-in centres run by school nurses have been successful, and evaluation by children and young people has enabled new services to be developed for self-harm and eating disorders.

53. There is an active Behavioural and Emotional Support Team which provides timely and effective support, intervention and referrals to CAMHS in all schools. Teachers speak positively of the multi-disciplinary team approach and the strong focus on key outcomes, including continuity of education and attendance.

54. There has been good consultation with children and young people, which has identified a need to develop awareness of emotional well-being along with coping strategies. Agencies, including Connexions and Barnardos, have staged several events and workshops over the last year, which include De-Stress workshops for Year 11 students. Students commented favourably on these events which enabled them to develop strategies to cope with stressful situations such as studying, bullying and peer pressure.

55. The web-based counselling service, KOOTH.com for young people aged 11 to 25, receives positive feedback from users; 89% of the young people preferred the media interface rather than phone counselling. The KOOTH counselling team works closely with the Young Women Christian Association which provides a face-to-face counselling service. In the last six months, 133 young people, including young men, were seen and positive outcomes were reported in building self-confidence and improving relationships.

56. The partnership is making good progress in developing and designing care pathways, which include learning difficulties and/or disabilities, perinatal mental health, autistic spectrum disorder for 0 to 5 year olds and self-harm. However, thresholds for assessment are high. Consequently, some young people who have ongoing mental health issues but do not trigger specialist services cannot always access these services and experience delays in intervention. Once support is in place, it is of good quality. The partnership is aware that there is still significant redesign work to be implemented for CAMHS Tier 3 to improve the overall provision.

57. For 16 to 18 year olds, services are good for young people who are looked after, those in need and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Multi-agency working when young people transfer to adult services is effective. However, there are no contracted services within CAMHS for young people aged 16 to 18 who are newly referred and for non-specialist cases. These young people are therefore signposted to adult services. The Department of Health has set a target of April 2009 to have these services fully in place and agencies in St Helens have a strategy to meet this. As detailed in the Youth Offending Report, services to support the mental and physical needs of young people who offend are lacking.

Service management



Capacity to improve



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Children and young people are at the heart of decision making, which is focused on outcomes.</p> <p>A focus on the most deprived communities and vulnerable groups.</p> <p>Very strong partnerships, with effective leaders, which facilitate joint understanding of needs and service delivery.</p> <p>Varied approach to engaging with children and young people.</p> <p>Strong financial management, with a focus on value for money.</p> <p>An ability to enhance capacity through partnership working.</p>	<p>The effectiveness of quality assurance procedures in the Youth Offending Team and the Youth Service.</p>

59. The 2007 annual performance assessment judged service management as good and capacity to improve as excellent. The area is making excellent progress in achieving long-term aims, for example, increasing standards of educational attainment, reducing school absenteeism, reducing teenage pregnancy, reducing road accidents and reversing declining breastfeeding rates. Partnerships are very strong and investment is being made in priority areas, for example, the Child Placement Strategy and Family Support Services. Investment and services are targeted at the most deprived communities. Whilst there are some high-cost areas, the council is addressing these effectively. There is excellent financial management, effective senior leadership and good workforce planning, which means the area has excellent capacity to improve.

60. Ambitions for children and young people are excellent. There are realistic and challenging ambitions, which are commonly shared throughout the council, and a very wide range of partners outside children's and young people's services. Ambitions are set out very clearly in the Children and Young People's Plan based on strong evidence and refreshed following consultation with children, young people and their families. *Every Child Matters* outcomes are reflected in a range of council plans and the shared ambitions of tackling health, unemployment and improving quality of life in the area are clearly reflected throughout plans for children and young people, whose cause is championed tirelessly by officers, elected members and partners. The Local Area Agreement sustains a focus on these major issues and children and young people's ambitions are reflected throughout.

61. The Children and Young People's Partnership works very well, together with strong, transparent leadership and clear governance structures, to deliver improved services. Improved outcomes are the clear focus of all partners, demonstrated through the provision of joint services, for example young people's counselling services, substance misuse services and dedicated social workers for schools. Children, young people and families are engaged through a variety of means in influencing the ambitions, for example developing the inclusion strategy. The voluntary sector is fully engaged with other partners and is clear about the vision for young people to address unemployment, education and health in particular. Ambitions are aimed at long-term and sustainable change. The partnership has been particularly good at understanding and addressing needs in the most deprived areas. All stakeholders overwhelmingly recognise the value of working together and the well-stated ambitions and priorities for children and young people facilitate joint working.

62. Prioritisation is excellent. Clear priorities are outlined in the Children and Young People's Plan following a comprehensive refresh. These are embedded as long-term priorities and are fully consistent with those of the council and other partners. The area undertakes an extensive range of activities to engage children and young people. Priorities are informed by children and young people, by outcomes achieved, by surveys and by detailed data from partners,

such as in public health, and local level data. Robust action is taken to deliver the priorities.

63. Despite a very low Black and minority ethnic population, the partnership is aware and responsive to the implications of changing demographics, for example recent arrivals of Eastern European migrants. On the ground, provision to individual children from migrant groups is very diligent.

64. Capacity is excellent. There are a number of services that have been assessed by the Drug Association of Police Officers or the Healthy Schools scheme as excellent or outstanding, for example services to tackle obesity, drug management and the Healthy Schools project. Joint work through the Children's and Young People's Partnership Board is effective, reflected by an open and transparent debate where young people are making direct and valued contribution. Partnerships, including those outside Children's and Young People's Services, for example the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, reflect a strong desire to focus on outcomes for children. There is a wide engagement from partners across the board, including the PCT, St Helens Chamber of Commerce, Connexions, NHS Trusts, the voluntary sector and council departments in which partners have an equal voice. The Fire Service, for example, hosts a new Family Support Service and is actively engaged in safety issues, from scrambler bike safety to removal of abandoned cars to prevent secondary fires, and the Turnaround project helps excluded young people gain relevant work experience.

65. An ability to secure capacity in innovative ways from a wide range of sources is a characteristic of St Helens. Pooled budgets are used with the PCT and Halton Council to provide joint services with good value for money, for example an emergency duty team. There is excellent collaboration with local colleges in providing a comprehensive mix of post-16 provision. Regeneration activity is making a difference for young people, with improved access to services and more opportunities for training and employment through innovative collaboration with the private sector.

66. There is a clear shift towards a preventative agenda, which is backed by resources for family support and children's centres. This has been reflected by national awards for a universal home visiting schedule and drug incident management in schools. Future delivery plans are very well project managed, such as Building Schools for the Future planning and extended schools, with a track record of timely delivery.

67. The transition of services into four geographical community partnership areas is being well managed. A mapping exercise has been undertaken to ensure that there is a good mix of provision and access in each area. Social workers and health visiting provision are re-aligned within these areas. This ensures there is a focus on local services and integrated community provision. For example, Peter Street and Bold Miners communities are heavily involved in

delivering local services. Work towards Children's Trust arrangements is progressing well.

68. Workforce recruitment and development are good. The council ensures that all services, including schools, have safe practices and robust arrangements to check staff who work with children and young people. A comprehensive workforce strategy has been developed and there is a clear understanding of future needs across agencies. For example, three local universities have been commissioned to provide and evaluate training specifically focused on working in a multi-agency environment. Training provision includes all partners. The council redeploys the skills of its staff very effectively, enabling service provision to be responsive. Capacity of staffing is enhanced through the Common Assessment Framework. The partnership is working hard to introduce this, and common templates are being used by all partners. Investment in training has been made in preparation for the introduction of the Common Assessment Framework electronic system.

69. Capacity of senior officers and support services to deliver the challenges ahead is excellent. Internal control and financial reporting are strong. Financial management is very effective and resources are allocated with a clear focus on outcomes, for example the provision of funds to reduce under-age alcohol sales. Support to schools in financial management and human resources is very good. Whilst school surpluses have been high, there is focused effort to reduce these and use them to provide new facilities and increase educational attainment. Human resource and finance staff are involved from the conception of new policies, ensuring advice is available to facilitate smooth project management. Capacity is enhanced further through good commissioning arrangements and the contribution of voluntary sector partners.

70. Overall, value for money is good. Whilst there are some high-cost areas, in particular for looked after children due to high numbers, there are action plans in place to reduce expenditure, backed by resources and a comprehensive understanding of the issues. Where there are services which are not delivering well, or where issues are brought to the attention of the partnership, swift action is taken. Robust attention is paid to tackling more difficult problems. For example, a very rigorous approach is taken to manage school place planning and, over time, this ensures that satisfaction levels remain high.

71. Scrutiny is strong and adds value. A follow-up scrutiny exercise, which involved all schools on anti-bullying policies, concluded that 90% of schools now have robust policies in place. Further examples of impact are a healthy lifestyles review, which led to training for foster carers, an infant feeding strategy and faster access to CAMHS for looked after children.

72. Performance management is good. The performance management database is nationally recognised and all partners have access to it. Performance management is used to identify poor performance and children's services are good at evaluating provision at a variety of levels, although quality

assurance processes are not sufficiently robust in the Youth Service and the youth Offending Service. Councillors and senior officers receive regular and timely performance reports which highlight areas for attention. Across the partnership, reports are shared at a strategic level. Performance reports are provided through evaluation of each *Every Child Matters* outcome area, which drives improvement. Benchmarking is used very well to understand variation. For example, the not-known figures for those not in employment, education or training were compared across Greater Merseyside, a target was set to reduce this to zero and the partnership is now the best performing in Greater Merseyside.

73. The partnership manages poor performance well. Data are used effectively to find solutions from traditionally untapped sources, for example breastfeeding initiation figures, where local data are collected and the poorest performing clinics set with differential targets for improvement. There has been a 50% greater improvement in the targeted areas. The learning from this model will be used to target smoking during pregnancy. There is an ability to target services which puts the needs of the most vulnerable as a priority. This has been the case with family support services, looked after children and foster carer provision. Quality assurance systems have had inconsistent impact in the Youth Offending Service and the Youth Service, where provision and outcomes require improvement.

Annex A

MOST RECENTLY PUBLISHED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN ST HELENS

Summary

St Helens Council consistently delivers services for children and young people well. The council has evaluated its provision effectively and has suitably prioritised the actions in the review of its CYPP. There has been significant progress made since last year on a number of fronts and the council is making strong contributions to the lives of children and young people within a locality of significant social disadvantage.

The full Annual Performance Assessment can be found at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=3077&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa_2007_342.pdf

Annex B: Summary of the Enhanced Youth Inspection Report

Main findings

1. St Helens values its youth service and its overall quality is adequate with several good features. There is a clear strategic direction and sufficient provision of youth work is secured, with the recent funding increase enabling much needed additional activities to be introduced at weekends. Overall, achievement is adequate. Whilst some of the work is of outstanding quality, too much is delivered inconsistently and this variability contributes to the wide differences in the standards of achievement observed. Many more young people are now gaining accredited outcomes from their involvement and the Duke of Edinburgh Award is very well established. However, not all of the accredited provision has been well judged and on some programmes the paperwork is disproportionate and reduces young people's interest and enjoyment in the activity. Useful progress has been made to increase the opportunities for young people to participate in civic affairs, though more still needs to be done to involve them in other areas of service provision. An impressive contribution is being made to some *Every Child Matters* outcomes, such as that made by the robust safeguarding arrangements, but a more strategic overview as to what the overall contribution of the youth service should be is needed. Recruitment to some senior posts has been slower than hoped for, which has held back progress in developing the service. The welcome rise in staff numbers, particularly of part-time staff, is highlighting the need for better communications as well as more targeted support in some areas such as drug and alcohol misuse. Commissioning arrangements are still very much in their infancy and some partners report they are unclear about plans to shape integrated youth provision.

Key aspect inspection grades

	Key Aspect	Grade
1	Standards of young people's achievement	2
	Quality of youth work practice	2
2	Quality of curriculum and resources	2
3	Leadership and management	2

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale
4: excellent/outstanding; 3: good; 2: adequate/satisfactory; 1: inadequate*

Strengths

- A clear strategic direction is provided.
- The support of elected members is strong.
- The commitment to expand further the programme of youth work is high.
- There are several examples of high achievement by young people and much good or outstanding youth work practice.
- Safeguarding procedures are clear and are consistently implemented.

Areas for development

- Address the wide inconsistencies in practice and achievement.
- Review the curriculum balance between programmes designed to provide young people with accredited outcomes and those aimed at meeting other and wider personal and social development needs.
- Increase the opportunities for young people to shape, monitor and evaluate provision.
- Keep partners and stakeholders abreast of plans for delivering youth work.
- Improve quality assurance procedures.

Annex C

CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT- CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Outcomes for children and young people in St Helens are good. The actions taken to promote their good health and well-being are good, although some challenges remain in reducing obesity and infant mortality. The arrangements for safeguarding are good, with rigorous monitoring of performance by an effective Local Safeguarding Children Board. There is good support and challenge to ensure that all children and young people enjoy and achieve. Pupils make good progress at schools, and results, particularly at age 16, are improving at a quicker rate than the national rate of improvement. Children and young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good services, resulting in increased life chances for them.
2. Service management in St Helens is good. The Director of Children's Services, supported by an excellent senior management group, provides strong, focussed and highly committed leadership. This permeates all management tiers, with excellent congruence with the work of members. There is rigorous evaluation of provision at a variety of levels in Children's Services, but quality assurance processes are not sufficiently robust in the Youth Service and the Youth Offending Service. There is very good consultation with young people, particularly with children and young people who are in the care of the council and those who need specialist support. The area recognises, however, that young carers need more help and, despite a wide range of targeted activities, rates of first-time entrants to the youth justice system must be reduced. Young people's positive influence is seen through the development of the Children and Young People's Plan and their contribution to key appointments in the council. Value for money is good. Funding is well targeted and used effectively where it is most needed.
3. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well through the multi-agency Healthy Schools and sports programmes. Reducing obesity and infant mortality are strategic priorities for the area as outcomes in these aspects are still a concern. Good progress is being made in reducing the rate of teenage pregnancies and increasing numbers of teenage mothers who are in education, employment and training. The health needs of looked after children and young people are met effectively, with better performance than similar authorities and national averages. Good progress has been made towards the implementation of a comprehensive children and adolescent emotional well-being and mental health service although some young people still experience difficulty in accessing services, particularly those known to the Youth Offending Service. Access and quality of services for specific groups, such as children from travelling communities, children and young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in the care of the council, are good.

The training for staff and the engagement of schools and the police in relation to substance misuse is good.

4. Children and young people appear safe and arrangements to ensure this are good. There is relentless focus on child protection and assessments are completed within timescales, but the safeguarding and quality of assessments of young people's needs in the youth justice system require more robust monitoring. The Local Safeguarding Children Board works well. Services for looked after children and young people are good and placement stability is also good. Rapid progress is being made with the implementation of the Common Assessment Framework and a successful multi-agency training programme has been undertaken. Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements are effective. There are safe recruitment practices at all levels. Actions to prevent and reduce the effects of bullying and harassment are strong, with good practice in addressing equality and diversity issues. The Youth Service contributes effectively to young people's understanding of these issues. The council is aware of the need to monitor the impact of recent arrivals from Eastern Europe and to tighten the reporting of racist incidents in schools and other settings. Road traffic accidents are much reduced. The council and partners work very effectively with the police to counter domestic violence. Work with the Fire Service is excellent.

5. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people enjoy their education and to achieve well is good. From a low starting point in social and language skills, good provision in early years ensures that children are prepared well for formal schooling. Standards have risen year on year and by the age of 11 children perform above comparator groups. Results at age 16 are much improved and have now reached the national average, although not yet at GCSE grades A*-C including English and mathematics. The council has very effective systems for identifying poorly performing schools and provides robust support and challenge to them. Attendance is close to that found in similar areas and nationally. Unauthorised absence, identified as a problem, features as a priority in the Children and Young People's Plan. A rigorous approach is taken to improve the results of looked after children and young people. A higher proportion than in similar authorities takes GCSEs and more leave care at 16 with nationally recognised accreditation. Over the last three years, the number of those achieving well in their primary schools and at age 16 has risen and is now above the performance of comparable councils and the national average. Very good support is given to ensure that young people follow suitable learning pathways. Data for 2007 indicate a significant closing of the gap between results for looked after young people and for other children in St Helens. However, it remains the case that too few young people leave care with five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C compared with their peers. Behaviour support is good. Integrated planning arrangements lead to good progress for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and partners are seeking to improve further the quality of transition to adult services. Provision in special schools is outstanding. There are good opportunities for children and young people to take part in leisure activities, and

the contribution of the youth service to improving provision on Fridays and at week-ends is much improved.

6. Partners are engaged fully in the development of the 14–19 strategy and funding has been approved for the development of a vocational learning centre. Reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training is a key priority as the figures are above those of comparator groups. Young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given good support, with improved opportunities for them to take relevant accredited courses. Work to reduce the number of care leavers not in education, employment or training has been a success.

7. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. The strong consultation and participation of children and young people have informed the Children and Young People's Plan. Children's Centres, extended school initiatives and activities supported by the voluntary and community sector enable children and young people, particularly the vulnerable, to access services. Reductions in the rates of young people who re-offend have been significant although too many enter the youth justice system and some young people known to the Youth Offending Service do not receive the required 25 hours of education per week. The Youth Service sets out to work with those most at risk. It offers a good range of projects to deter young people from offending and, although not consistently so, some activities are highly effective.

8. The capacity of council services to improve is outstanding. The council understands its strengths and weaknesses very well. Performance data and consultations are used very effectively to inform priorities and improve provision. Leadership is strong, with excellent partnerships across a wide range of agencies. Strategic planning for children and young people is very good, supported by robust management of resources and high levels of commitment to projects. Strategies to address staff shortages are good and workforce development, including joint staff training and safe recruitment practices, have high focus across the partnership.

Annex D

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 St Helens and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being. Together with the Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services, joint area reviews focus on the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and are well prepared to secure economic well-being. This review explores these issues by focusing on children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, children who are looked after and children at risk or requiring safeguarding and one additional investigation. 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).