



**Better
education
and care**

Joint area review

London Borough of Islington
Children's Services Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

Adult Learning Inspectorate
Audit Commission
Commission for Social Care Inspection
Healthcare Commission
HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
HM Inspectorate of Court Administration
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Ofsted

Audience	Published	Reference no.
All	13 March 2007	206



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Contents

Introduction	2
Context	3
Summary report	6
Grades	12
Recommendations	13
Main report	13
Outcomes for children and young people	13
The impact of local services	16
Being healthy	16
Staying safe	18
Enjoying and achieving	21
Making a positive contribution	23
Achieving economic well-being	25
Service management	27
Annex: The children and young people's section of the corporate assessment report	30

Introduction

1. This joint area review was conducted using the arrangements required under section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of eight inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), the Healthcare Commission (HCC), the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and the Audit Commission. The review was undertaken according to the requirements of the *Framework for the inspection of children's services*.
2. The review was linked to the contemporaneous corporate assessment of the local council by the Audit Commission and its findings are represented in the relevant part of the corporate assessment report.
3. This review describes the outcomes achieved by children and young people growing up in the Islington 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. In the first stage inspectors 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 follow up visit
 - briefings from staff within inspectorates, commissions and other public bodies in contact with local providers.

6. During the second stage inspectors carried out 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. Fieldwork included gathering evidence on 10 key judgements, selected because of their critical importance to improving outcomes for children and young people in the local area. Inspectors studied provision closely in the London EC1 neighbourhood. Fieldwork involved visits to the local service settings including the Whittington Hospital, the area social care duty team and the team for children with disabilities. Inspectors had discussions with children and young people and their parents and carers, with councillors and officers of the local authority, their equivalents in other public agencies, service users and community representatives. Reviews of case files for children and young people receiving support from a number of local agencies were also included.

Context

7. Islington is a small inner London borough with significant cultural, economic and ethnic diversity among the population. The borough extends to Finsbury Park, Highbury, Holloway, Barnsbury, Clerkenwell, King's Cross, Archway and Highgate. The three neighbouring boroughs, Hackney, Camden and Haringey, are larger than Islington and are also diverse, with natural neighbourhoods forming across borough boundaries. The southern border adjoins the City of London and the heart of London's legal and commercial areas. This proximity to an affluent working population and good transport links by rail, underground and bus contribute to a reputation for parts of Islington as centres for eating, shopping and evening entertainment. The area contains some of the most sought after historic housing in the capital alongside mixed-period social housing. Islington is a crowded place to live with a highly mobile population, three times more densely inhabited than the London average. Open spaces are relatively small and must meet the need for peace and quiet as well as outdoor activity for all ages.

8. The population of Islington is over 180,000 and growing rapidly, with a birth rate 20% above the national average. The 39,200 children and young people make up a lower proportion of residents compared with other similar boroughs. More than 60% of households have no children. The majority of the population was not born in Islington and represents highly diverse backgrounds. The population of children is more ethnically diverse than that of the adults. About two thirds of pupils in Islington schools are of black and minority ethnic origin, with the largest group being of Black African. More than 10% of white pupils are not White British and the proportion is growing rapidly as large numbers of families have arrived from the expanded European Union since 2005. There is also sizable representation from Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Somali groups. Pupils speak some 130 languages. The predominant religious groups in the area are Christian and Muslim.

9. Islington's communities are diverse in their levels of well-being, with marked polarisation of prosperity. Islington has a large proportion of highly qualified residents and the average earnings of households where adults are in work is among the highest in the country. Yet, overall, it is the sixth most deprived authority in England and Wales and three quarters of residents live in wards ranked among the 10% most socially deprived in the country. Health inequalities are marked in the population as a whole. Extremes of wealth and poverty are spread throughout the borough on a household-by-household basis, even in the most affluent wards. Children are disproportionately represented among communities that are deprived. With a rate of 6.7 deaths per 1,000 live births, infant mortality is high. Although the rate of adult employment in Islington is higher than the London average, over 40% of children live in households without an adult working. Even more, 49.8% of those aged 0 to 19, live in households on means tested benefits. As many as 41% of children live in overcrowded households.

10. Extensive regeneration is taking place within the borough. Large-scale schemes include the London Development Agency King's Cross area project, improvements to the congested A1 road area and railway projects. The EC1 New Deal for Communities scheme (EC1 New Deal) is at the mid-point of a 10-year regeneration cycle. The council and partners have set an improved education vision to be implemented through Building Schools for the Future. The recently completed move of Arsenal Football Club to the Emirates Stadium enabled the generation of new social housing and jobs across some of the most deprived communities. The range of employment available locally is relatively low. Small leisure, arts and media businesses are thriving. The council is the largest employer, although the majority of council employees live outside the borough.

11. The council is small compared with other metropolitan boroughs. The Liberal Democrats lead the administration with no overall control. Of the 48 councillors, there are 24 Liberal Democrats, 23 Labour Party councillors and the Green Party has one seat. The council has a leader and a cabinet system of governance. There is an executive lead member for children and young people's services. An overview committee scrutinises executive decisions. Three review committees make proposals to the executive. Four local member area committees meet to consider matters of local interest and a standards committee oversees the conduct of councillors.

12. Partnerships are a strong feature of the area. Islington Strategic Partnership (ISP) provides the forum for long-term planning through implementation of the strategic vision, One Islington, and the allocation of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund grants. The area is progressing towards children's trust type arrangements through proposed section 31 agreements, based on the effective relationships established between the council, Primary Care Trust (PCT), the police and other partners within the ISP. The Children and Young People's Board (the Board) was set up in September 2004 and a Children's Services Director has been in place since December 2004. The Board

has the responsibility for delivering the key priorities for children and young people set out in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP).

13. The council provides children's services through five divisions in the Children's Services Directorate: Children and Families, Commissioning, Children's Partnership, Community Education Services and Policy, Performance and Resources. Social care teams provide a duty and assessment service, adoption support, family support, services for disabled children, for looked after children and for those leaving care. Nearly 390 children are looked after by the council and around 150 children are on the child protection register. The population of looked after children remains high in comparison to similar authorities and national averages, although it has been reducing steadily since 2002, with a 15% reduction in the last two years. More than a fifth of looked after children are unaccompanied asylum seekers. Three quarters of looked after children are placed outside the borough, although 70% are placed within 20 miles of their home address. More than half of the children placed with foster carers are placed with independent fostering agencies rather than Islington carers. The majority of children placed in residential care (26 out of 36) are in independent sector provision.

14. Islington is unusual in that following the local education authority inspection in 1999 it was directed by the Secretary of State for Education to outsource its education functions. CEA@Islington (CEA) was appointed and a successful partnership was established. The direction was lifted in 2006 and the council agreed a new contract with CEA. Within the local authority area, there are 14 integrated early years education providers in children's centres, early years centres and a nursery school. There are 62 schools, comprising 45 primary, nine secondary, five pupil referral units and three special schools on five sites. A small number are faith and single sex schools. Following primary education, 40% of 11 year olds do not continue into Islington secondary schools. All secondary schools are designated specialist schools and three have sixth forms that work as a consortium. One secondary school is planned to close in 2008 to become an academy and an additional secondary school will open as an academy in September 2007.

15. Just over 3% of 0–19 year olds have a statement of special educational need. Over a quarter of visually and hearing-impaired pupils are educated in suitable provision outside the borough. Plans to drive forward the integration of special education with mainstream education by the co-location of some schools are well advanced. The Golden Lane and Hungerford sites will each incorporate a primary school, children's centre and a special school. The planned City of London academy will be co-located with a school for severely disabled young people.

16. London Central Learning and Skills Council works with the council Central London Connexions, City and Islington College, Springboard Islington, and the secondary schools to deliver the 14–19 Strategy under the Islington 14–19 Strategy Board. Post-16 education and training is mainly provided by City and

Islington College through its five specialised centres, the Islington Consortium of three school sixth forms and one locally based work-based training providers. Many young people access training and education in other London boroughs. Entry to Employment (E2E) provision is managed by Springboard Islington. Adult and community learning, including family learning, is commissioned by the council from a range of providers.

17. In Islington, primary health care for children is arranged and provided by the Islington PCT, although some families are registered with GPs in adjacent boroughs. The Whittington Hospital NHS Trust is the main provider of acute health and accident and emergency services for Islington residents, although some Islington residents, especially those in the south part of the borough, access such services provided by the University College London Hospital NHS Trust. The Islington PCT is the main provider of children's mental health services. The London Ambulance Service NHS Trust is responsible for all of London's ambulance services. No major organisational changes across the NHS Trusts that serve Islington are underway or planned to affect children's health services.

18. There are no young offender institutions in Islington. The nearest male establishment is Feltham about 20 miles to the west and the nearest female setting is in Kent. Holloway Women's Prison has a mother and baby unit for which Islington PCT provides health services. Islington Youth Offending Team manages and supports young people entering the criminal justice system. The area is served by the Metropolitan Police Authority.

Summary report

Outcomes for children and young people

19. Outcomes for children and young people in Islington are adequate with some indications of improvement in recent years. Overall, children and young people appear safe and those most at risk are adequately protected. Health outcomes for children and young people in Islington are satisfactory, although there are wide variations between groups across the borough. Children and young people enjoy their life and learning, and achievement is adequate. Educational attainment is below national averages but improving. The majority of children and young people are involved in a wide range of recreational, artistic and sporting activities. Many contribute to some extent to developments in their schools and local communities and the majority behave responsibly. Children and young people are adequately prepared for working life although the outcomes are not improving well enough for some young people in vulnerable groups. Too many children and young people live in overcrowded housing and in households on means-tested benefits.

The impact of local services

20. **The impact of local services in improving outcomes for children and young people is good.** The council and its partners understand the serious challenges to well-being. Health, education and social care services are responsive to cultural diversity and equality issues and achieve a good impact overall. Integration of services is having a positive effect, particularly in early years, around Sure Start projects and in the work of children's centres, although many outcomes for older children are improving less consistently or developing more slowly. The contribution of the voluntary and private sector enhances the range of opportunities, particularly for the most vulnerable children and families.

21. The work of health services to target the significant number of children in the most deprived circumstances is effective. There are signs of improved health outcomes for some groups, although the rate of improvement for indicators such as dental health is slow. Services work well together to provide a safe environment with the result that accidents are decreasing and most children and young people feel safe to travel around and make use of the opportunities in the area. Arrangements for those most at risk of harm or neglect are improving with a good range of preventative services, although a fully effective common assessment framework is not yet in place. The impact of all services in helping children and young people to enjoy and achieve personal development is good. Educational attainment remains below average. However, the gap between Islington and similar authorities is closing, with steady improvement over a five-year period. Most services provide opportunities for children and young people to make their views known and take responsibility, and many participate to some degree in relevant consultation processes. The contribution of local services to ensure that children and young people achieve economic well-being is adequate. Strategic planning to support the coordination of 14–19 education and training is at an early stage of development. There is much to be done to improve housing for families and to ensure they benefit from employment and improved incomes through regeneration initiatives.

22. Established partnership working, the development of shared ambitions, measurably improved outcomes for targeted groups in education and social care, and good strategic response to matters of concern raised at previous inspections demonstrate that the capacity to improve is good.

Being healthy

23. **The work of local services in securing the health of children and young people is good.** Some health indicators are relatively poor compared with national averages. Deprivation factors are reflected in wide variations in indicators such as incidence of low birth weight across the borough. Health and social care services work well together to address issues and many outcomes are improving. Although the teenage pregnancy rate remains above the local

target, multi-agency interventions are proving successful and there has been some decrease over recent years.

24. Services provide good support for parents and carers to keep their children healthy, especially through the developing children's centres and the work of health visitors. Healthy lifestyles and physical health are well promoted in Islington schools, which have achieved the interim Healthy Schools target, and through uptake of other services such as Pulse N7, a one-stop shop providing a range of services for adolescents. Opportunities for physical activity are provided widely through outdoor play and sports, with good uptake.

25. Children and young people benefit from particularly good access to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) outreach programmes. The physical and mental health needs of looked after children are met well through a proactive specialist health team, which works effectively with children whether placed in the borough or outside. Services for children with disabilities under the age of five are good; they are provided by a specialist, multi-disciplinary team, and are now being extended to serve all children with disabilities from birth to 19.

Staying safe

26. **The impact of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good.** Parents and carers are provided with a wide range of advice and information about safety in the home and wider community. Centralised vetting procedures and generally good risk assessments ensure that settings providing services for children and young people are secure and suitable. Young people told inspectors that they feel safe in most parts of the borough, though not always at night. They valued access to safe facilities provided in schools and young people's services.

27. Incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised through good quality social work services and successful inter-agency collaboration. The council provides an effective lead in developing responsive family services, which enable more children to be supported at home. This action is reducing the numbers of looked after children. There is strong inter-agency engagement with this agenda and a few excellent examples of innovative practice. There is a comprehensive process to quality assure child protection social work provision once the initial decision to provide an assessment has been made, reflected in good performance indicators. There are stringent processes for ensuring that children do not go missing through tracking the movement of pupils between schools.

28. The Local Safeguarding Children Board has a clear programme and representation from all key agencies, including the voluntary sector, at the appropriate level, although funding arrangements are based on historic patterns and are not securely linked to future work plans. Good local initiatives involve faith groups and ethnic minorities. Management action following a serious case

review was thorough but slow. The area has not yet fully implemented an inter-agency process to audit referral decisions.

29. Assessment and case management for children with disabilities and their families have a good impact on meeting needs, although progress is yet to be made in integrating assessment and review processes. Direct payments are beginning to make a significant contribution to choice for parents. Broad care packages meet leisure and play needs as well as family support and respite services.

Enjoying and achieving

30. **The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good.** Children and young people benefit from the multi-agency integration strategy, which is working well. The agencies work effectively together, targeting vulnerable individuals, groups or areas appropriately and supporting parents and carers well. Parents value the comprehensive interpreting services that help them to be involved in their children's learning. Early years providers offer choice through a wide range of good quality childcare and nursery education. Administrative services for admission to schools are competent and work with parents to ensure that children and young people are admitted to a school of their choice as quickly as possible.

31. Support for schools to improve their performance is strong and has been effective in all but two of the pupil referral units (PRUs). The strategic direction and purpose of the PRUs lacks clarity. Educational partners work well together to maximise pupil attendance, behaviour and achievement with the result that, overall, pupils are making better, and sometimes good, progress. Absence rates are declining and good action is taken to prevent exclusions. Rates of success at GCSE at age 16 are lower in Islington than in similar authorities but the gap is closing. Statutory and voluntary agencies provide a good range of purposeful recreational, leisure and out of school activities for young people.

32. The attainment and level of attendance of looked after children are satisfactory and improving. Personal education plans are of good quality, with additional tuition available to the children and their carers when required. Significant numbers are in higher education sponsored by the borough, and their success is celebrated. Specialist professionals and administrative teams work closely with children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, their parents and carers to ensure early identification of need and appropriate support in special or mainstream education.

Making a positive contribution

33. **The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good.** Adults provide effective role models throughout the range of care and education settings, encouraging good relationships and participation. Good inter-agency collaboration supports the

great majority of children and young people in dealing with routine changes and major challenges in their lives, particularly those from vulnerable groups and young people new to Islington.

34. Young people who offend and those with disabilities are routinely consulted when decisions are being made about services to meet their needs. Focused and creative support for looked after children through the Children's Active Involvement Service (CAIS) ensures they can contribute effectively to their reviews. With support, they are also increasingly involved in wider corporate parenting work to good effect. Groups of young people have opportunities to express their views on a variety of strategic and community issues through schools councils, occasional conferences and a recently strengthened network of youth forums. There is energetic encouragement to take part in democratic activity. However, a participation strategy to systematically engage more young people in constructive consultation and service design is at an early stage of implementation.

35. Racial and religious harassment is well monitored and the incidence is low and decreasing. There are effective policies and some innovative practice in place to deal with bullying, but it is still a concern for some young people. Agencies cooperate to target antisocial behaviour. A comprehensive range of diversionary activities and discouragement, including pioneering Antisocial Behaviour Contracts Plus (ABC+), is in place. There has been good impact from the improving Youth Offending Team to reduce the numbers of young people coming into the youth justice system above and beyond the local target. There has been some limited recent success in reducing the rate at which young people re-offend and figures are now just under the national average.

Achieving economic well-being

36. **The impact of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is adequate.** Islington has recently appointed a 14–19 Director and is working with relevant partners to develop a 14–19 strategy. A good start has been made on partnership working. However, there are too few courses in some subjects to allow young people to progress through different levels within the borough. The proportion of young people achieving level 2 qualifications by the age of 19 is low in comparison to the national average.

37. The range of provision to help young people prepare for further education, employment and training is improving. Young people receive satisfactory information, advice and guidance about the training and education opportunities available to them. The varied projects and initiatives, including business mentoring, are not sufficiently coordinated or well-targeted. The number of young people between the ages of 16 and 18 participating in employment, education or training is increasing but remains low in some vulnerable groups. Nearly one third of looked after children are not in education, employment or training compared with 11% of their peers. The

council provides good in-house employment opportunities for care leavers. Significant numbers are in higher education supported by the borough. Provision for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate for those with low level needs, but poor for those who are 16 plus with complex or profound needs.

38. Comprehensive information is available for parents seeking childcare. Regeneration initiatives such as those at Kings Cross and the Emirates Stadium are creating housing and new jobs. However, the benefits are insufficiently focused on the needs of young people and their families in the area. As yet there is no significant impact on the high proportion of children who live in overcrowded accommodation or the proportion of families that have no employment. Suitable housing for families and young people is in short supply.

Service management

39. **The management of services for children and young people is good. The capacity to improve further is also good.** The ambitions established by the council and its partners for children and young people in Islington are good. Councillors are highly ambitious for the area, particularly for the improvement of education through academies and well-supported Building Schools for the Future programmes. The council's active leadership has mobilised a broad partnership to focus on delivering better outcomes for local children and young people through the CYPP. The council, schools and other partners have well developed approaches to addressing the specific patterns of diversity and deprivation in the area. Prioritisation to improve outcomes for children and young people is adequate. The council is channelling additional resources into children's services. The CYPP has 37 priority objectives linking themes and service plans to well-defined needs. Nevertheless, these priorities are not yet comprehensively aligned to corporate priorities.

40. The overall capacity of the council and its partners is good. The council works well with a wide range of strategic and local partners. The formidable energy of the private, voluntary and community sectors greatly extends the council's capacity. Value for money is adequate. Spend is often above that of similar councils. Education and health outcomes are below average but there is a strong record of improvement in a challenging context. The capacity of the council and its partners to improve further is good. Structural change towards the better integration of services has done much to improve performance in education in the last few years. The council's approach to strategic commissioning and workforce planning is founded well on existing expertise. However, the council has been slow to develop the Common Assessment Framework. Performance management is adequate. Good quality assurance procedures and performance management arrangements have contributed to improvement in some social care service areas and in schools. However, performance management is insufficiently focused in some areas and governance and accountabilities arrangements for partnerships are over-

complex. Although not always systematically built upon, there are good initiatives to engage young people.

Grades

Grades awarded:

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

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

Recommendations

For immediate action

- The council and partners should improve the information and communications technology infrastructure to deliver the Common Assessment Framework and improve information sharing between partners.
- The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) should review processes for auditing child protection work among member agencies and establish systems for the board to monitor and evaluate the interim response to serious case reviews in order to ensure that all agencies learn from such reviews.
- The council and CEA@Islington should clarify the strategic aims and purpose of the pupil referral units to provide a secure framework for their improvement.

For action over the next six months

- The council and its partners should improve the coordination of children and young people's contribution to the community to extend their participation, increase understanding and enable good practice to be shared.
- The council and its partners should further reduce the numbers of young people, particularly in vulnerable groups, not in education, employment or training and take steps to maximise the opportunities for support them through regeneration initiatives.
- The council and its partners should rationalise CYPP planning and decision-making structures and clarify the lines of accountability, aligning CYPP priorities, corporate priorities and the overall vision for Islington.

Main report

Outcomes for children and young people

41. **Outcomes for children and young people in Islington are adequate.** Children and young people are generally healthy, although there are wide variations in health outcomes, which are mainly poorer for the many children living in deprived circumstances. Many children and young people enjoy their learning and development, and achievement is adequate. Young people are adequately prepared for working life and have a good range of opportunities to contribute to the community and take responsibility. From the

evidence gathered, most children and young people appear safe, and there is good protection for those most at risk.

42. Outcomes for vulnerable children and young people are broadly good. Looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make adequate progress at school, greatly helped by efforts to improve stability and help with transitions. The great majority of looked after children have health checks and their health is good. Some care leavers initially take up local council employment and housing. Children and young people in need, or who are looked after and others receiving specific services, such as young people who offend, are involved fully in reviews of provision to meet their needs. The proportion of young people aged 16 and over from these vulnerable groups not in education, training or employment is relatively high compared with other groups.

43. **Most children and young people are generally healthy.** Many of Islington's health indicators reflect the fact that children and young people are disproportionately represented among the borough's deprived communities. The picture has improved over recent years. Nevertheless, it is still a mixed picture, with a number of indicators worse than comparable councils or than England averages. Rates for infant mortality and the proportion of children who die before their first birthday are worse than the average for England. Measles, mumps and rubella immunisation rates are below those for England but above those of comparable councils. Islington children at age five have more decayed, missing or filled teeth than the national average. Recent survey data show that higher proportions of some groups of Islington children are overweight or obese than the national average. Hospital admissions due to substance misuse are above those for comparable councils but not significantly above those for England. Some health indicators have improved, including rates for stillbirths, low birth weights, immunisation, early infant mortality and dental health. The teenage conception rate has decreased but remains above the local target figure. The Tellus survey data present a more positive picture of children and young people's health: 95% of the young people responding to the joint area review survey said that they felt very healthy or quite healthy.

44. **Children and young people appear safe.** Most children in Islington are safeguarded and those most at risk are safeguarded well. Parents and carers are provided with a wide range of information and advice on keeping their children safe. Children and young people are cared for and educated in safe environments. There is good tracking of children as they move between schools, although not enough is known about under fives when they move homes. There are more children on the child protection register and looked after than in similar authorities. The numbers of children whose names have been placed on the child protection register for a second or third time has increased. The proportion of initial and core assessments of need carried out within the target timescales is adequate. The borough observes its statutory responsibilities for looked after children up to the age of 18 and beyond, and children benefit from regular and frequent visits by supervising social workers.

The number of children remaining in their placements without frequent moves is good, and the rate of placements with foster carers is satisfactory and improving, though the proportion in residential care remains relatively high. Significant numbers of looked after children are placed permanently through adoption, special guardianship and kinship arrangements. Children in need and those with disabilities are effectively assisted through a range of family support, short breaks, play and holiday provision.

45. Children and young people enjoy life well and their achievement is adequate. Children and young people are effectively prepared to meet the early learning goals through good quality early years provision, and parents feel well supported. There are sufficient school places for children and young people in Islington and admission arrangements are well managed. Standards of attainment at each key stage are below the national average but the rate of progress and/or value added at the different key stages is overall above the national average. Very few children are excluded from school. The attainment and school attendance rates of looked after children are higher than the national average. Good relationships with the business community and voluntary bodies enhance the provision offered in schools. Attendance at secondary school is in line with the national average but at primary school is below and improvement is slow. Children and young people enjoy living in Islington and participate in a wide range of quality recreational activities and many join in Islington's Young People's Service activities. Inclusion is a high priority and many children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disability are integrated into mainstream schools.

46. Most children and young people behave responsibly and many make a positive contribution to their communities. Children and young people benefit from positive relationships with professionals and make good progress in their emotional, social and personal development. Many take on roles of responsibility and act as peer mentors to help others settle into new circumstances and behave well. New parents and families experiencing difficulties get prompt help to support children's emotional well-being. Most children and young people take the normal transitions on starting and changing schools in their stride. Children facing additional challenges such as disability, unaccompanied asylum seekers or looked after children moving between foster placements manage well. Most looked after children, children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and young people who offend are involved effectively in reviewing decisions about their own lives. A good proportion of pupils can make their views known through school councils. Some contribute to consultations on a wide range of community issues, although consultation is not always directly relevant to projects that matter to the young people themselves. A few young people are involved in innovative schemes to contribute to the management of services, but as yet participation is not routine or spread widely enough to involve more young people. Many children take part in activities targeted to reduce antisocial behaviour, and respond well to antisocial behaviour contracts and orders. The proportion of young people who offend for the first time is decreasing and is good when compared with similar areas. The

rate of re-offending is increasing, except among the small group of looked after young people who offend.

47. Young people are adequately prepared for working life. Increasing numbers of young people participate in education or training after Year 11. The proportion of young people aged 16 to 18 not in employment, education or training is improving but continues to be high compared to central London averages. The participation in employment, education or training of young people from some vulnerable groups, including looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is among the lowest recorded in the Central London Connexions area. Overall achievements for learners following GCE A level qualifications are below similar areas and the progress made relative to their prior attainment is adequate. Learners' success rates at the City and Islington College are very good and are above national averages at all levels. A high number of young people from the City and Islington Sixth Form College progress into higher education, including a significant number of care leavers. Progression to further education, employment or training from the E2E programmes is satisfactory. The completion rate for apprenticeship frameworks is poor. The overall proportion of 19 year olds who gain a level 2 qualification is poor and below similar areas. Effective regeneration initiatives are improving conditions for children and young people but too many families live in overcrowded accommodation.

The impact of local services

Being healthy

48. The work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Islington council, the PCT and other agencies together provide good services to support parents and carers in keeping their children healthy. Islington children and their families benefit from mainstream and targeted funds, such as Sure Start, EC1 New Deal, CAMHS and Substance Misuse, which support, for example, the well coordinated inter-agency and multi-disciplinary services in children's centres. Health visitors play a significant role in these centres, with direct benefits to wider child health promotion and child health surveillance. Play-and-stay arrangements have proved successful as centres extend their reach to local families. Good encouragement is given to parents and children to eat healthily at home and to prepare healthy packed lunches. General practitioners are generally less engaged with these agendas.

49. The number of individuals assisted by children's centres has been increasing year-on-year, with staff from maternity services increasingly involved. Although specific vulnerable groups are identified for support, the geographical spread of groups and mobility of the population have resulted in slow and variable impact. The number of expectant mothers smoking during pregnancy has reduced and is lower than the England average; the proportion of mothers starting breastfeeding has increased and is now in line with the national average. Many of Islington's immunisation rates are above those of

comparable councils but they are all below national averages. Maternity services from the Whittington Hospital provide well-regarded comprehensive services for mothers and babies in Holloway Prison within the borough.

50. Healthy lifestyles for children and young people are promoted through good links with health and other staff in a range of settings, for example schools, the Youth Offending Service, and the walk-in, one-stop shop adolescent service, Pulse N7. There are good programmes that encourage physical activity, such the Arsenal Football Club community programmes, the Islington Boat Club, the White Lion Centre, the adventure playgrounds and the St Mary's Youth Club. The council is also making increased use of the borough's small number of parks, while schools are increasing their access to physical education facilities. The strategy Proactive Islington – Promoting Physical Activity has been endorsed by both the council and the PCT. Islington achieved the December 2006 interim target number of Healthy Schools.

51. Islington has a range of successful health promotion programmes, for example Teens and Toddlers which seeks to reduce teenage pregnancy. Schools are beginning to extend their provision of information and services about sexual health. Health, social care and education services, both statutory and independent, work well together in Islington in educating young people about drugs and in working with drug users. The Young People's Drug and Alcohol Team provides a recently strengthened tier 2 service, and, in January 2007, a new drugs worker was due to start work with the Youth Offending Service. Islington's contract with the education services provider, CEA@Islington, includes health objectives. School students have learned about the dangers of misusing drugs. A smoking cessation worker employs an adviser to undertake specialist work with young people. Through Pulse N7, young people access same day sexual health screening. A dedicated health team works with looked after children including those who are unaccompanied asylum seekers.

52. Islington children, young people and their families benefit from a good range of primary and secondary health services. Families have ready access to the minor injuries unit at St Bartholomew's Hospital and to the accident and emergency services at the Whittington and the University College Hospitals. In the accident and emergency units at these two hospitals, the percentage of nurses who are qualified children's nurses is close to the England average. There are daily rapid access GP-referral clinics at the Whittington Hospital. Islington children at age five have more decayed, missing or filled teeth than the national average, although there is some local evidence in the SureStart areas that the rate of decay is improving for some young children that have had regular dental services.

53. Specific health needs of ethnic minorities are well understood and closely targeted. Specialist health staff work with the particular black and ethnic minority children and young people at risk of sickle cell disease. Among other special health needs identified in the area, substance misuse services are

developing further, following the termination of the contract with a previous provider.

54. CAMHS services are good, providing a full range of mental health services within the borough. Islington PCT achieved the maximum score on the CAMHS performance indicator, with good levels of funding. Children and young people have good access to its mental health services with little or no waiting time. There is a good CAMHS presence in the community, with very diverse community outreach services for parents and children, for example in schools and children's centres, with further outreach developments taking place, for example in the Youth Offending Services and at Pulse N7. Support for looked after children is good. CAMHS has a good multi-disciplinary paediatric liaison team at the Whittington Hospital, which has developed a protocol that works well for dealing with young people coming to the hospital after self-harming. CAMHS also provides a good service for young people with significant drug and alcohol problems.

55. The PCT specialist health team provides a good service for looked after children, maintaining contact with them wherever they are placed, including the significant proportion placed out of the borough. This team achieves high immunisation rates and facilitates contact with other health services. The team's assessments are responsive to family history, such as parental drug use, and are followed by effective support from dedicated staff, including one-to-one work with children and their carers.

56. Islington's specialist multi-disciplinary team provides a good service, including health services for children under five with disabilities. This model is being extended under unified management arrangements between the PCT and the council to provide a specialist multi-agency team for all children and young people with disabilities. The team also works with children in school settings.

Staying safe

57. **The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good.** Most children and young people in Islington are safe. Parents and carers are provided with a wide range of advice and information about safety in the home and wider community. Travel to school schemes promote road safety. Settings that provide care for children are safe and compliant with regulations. There is excellent support to professionals working in the area of domestic violence from a specialist domestic violence worker who provides consultation, specialist assessments and inter-agency training. Arrangements for tracking children and young people once they are school age move from school to school, and those educated other than in school, are good.

58. Young people told inspectors that they felt safe in most areas of the borough but some reported that they do not feel safe going out at night or on public transport. This restricted their use of leisure facilities. Early years, schools and the young people service provide a good, safe environment for young people.

59. Arrangements within social services for responding to referrals are good, with clear procedures and effective management oversight in most locations. Children benefit from the support of motivated and skilled workers. Social work caseloads are reasonable and varied, enabling staff to retain their motivation and develop practice. The quality of assessment and the focus on the child are good. However, on implementing new methods of calculating the number of initial and core assessments completed within required timescales, the council re-assessed the reported figures and overall picture and judged that, although satisfactory, the situation was not as good previously thought. Child protection work is purposeful and clearly planned through well-attended core groups. All children on the child protection register are allocated to qualified social workers and staff are effectively supervised. There are clear systems for the transfer of work between teams. Children who have been on the child protection register remain allocated to a worker for at least six months after they have been de-registered, and benefit from a comprehensive child in need planning process. Almost all casework within the children's social work service is allocated, although at the time of inspection a small number of children in need cases were receiving services from agencies but were unallocated.

60. There is a rigorous programme of audit and quality assurance across social work services following a decision to provide an assessment. This includes audits by senior management. However, plans to match this rigour with inter-agency auditing of the initial decision-making process when referrals are first received have not yet been put into place. A review commissioned by the LSCB following the unexpected death of a child was thorough and produced a detailed action plan including inter-agency auditing arrangements, but with a long timeframe for completion. At the time of inspection, the timescale had not elapsed and the impact had not been evaluated.

61. This being said, there is generally good collaboration between partner agencies to support and protect children through Islington LSCB. There is a comprehensive work programme, meeting national expectations of LSCB responsibilities, although funding arrangements are based on historic levels and are not based on the future workload. The LSCB benefits from wide representation including the voluntary sector. Good arrangements are in place to secure the involvement of faith groups and ethnic minorities represented in the community.

62. The range and impact of family support and preventative services are good, and this is effective in reducing the numbers of children going onto the child protection register or becoming looked after. The numbers of children being re-registered on the child protection register increased from that in previous years but the management response to this has been robust, with marked improvement since April 2006. Agencies have agreed new guidance for team managers when working with a family previously on the child protection register. This is further enhanced by increased investment in family support services to provide additional support when families come off the child protection register.

63. The processes for vetting staff and obtaining Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks within the council are strong. A centralised service is also available to the voluntary sector and is widely used. However, when this service is not used, there is a lack of clarity about monitoring arrangements. The safeguarding of looked after children is effectively promoted and supervision is frequent and well monitored. All looked after children benefit from the support of qualified social workers and statutory visits are undertaken consistently for children placed both within and outside the borough. The reduction in the looked after children population is being achieved safely and with due regard to placement stability. The increased focus on effective, multi-agency gate-keeping, including family group conferences, and the commissioning of packages of support for children and young people at home, is ensuring better outcomes and an improved choice of care options. Some innovative services, such as Pulse N7, delivered in partnership with universal services for young people, are beginning to have a positive impact on admissions to the care system.

64. Most placements for looked after children are outside the borough. Although there is not yet sufficient capacity to offer a local placement for most children within Islington, good progress has been made. Independent providers of foster care placements have recently been consolidated into preferred providers, but the use of residential care, mostly in the independent sector and all spot-purchased, is still relatively high though reducing. A well-considered commissioning strategy to address the continued high costs for older looked after children is being treated as a priority by the council.

65. Adoption performance was very good in 2005–06. Significant numbers of permanent placements for looked after children are achieved through a good range of adoption, special guardianship and kinship arrangements.

66. The safeguarding of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effectively promoted, and assessment and case management are good. This work is divided between a dedicated disabled children's team and the mainstream childcare service, but the service reaches a good proportion of families with a disabled child. Access to direct payments is good and comparatively high numbers of parents to date have been helped to take this option. Packages of care are flexible and include leisure and play needs as well as family support and short breaks.

Enjoying and achieving

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

Since the Islington local education authority inspection of 1999, which identified a number of areas of concern, education services have been contracted out to CEA@Islington. Robust action at management and operational level by CEA to support school improvement and establish good relationships with schools with and other educational partners has ensured that, overall, better and sometimes good progress is being made by children and young.

68. A wide range of high quality support is available for parents and carers to help them understand and promote their child's learning. This includes work with those in the most deprived areas or who face particular challenges. There is targeted support such as curriculum workshops for those less familiar with the English curriculum. Well regarded interpreting and translation services are available to meet the diverse range of languages spoken in Islington, which facilitates high quality relationships with parents and carers. A wide range of family learning is also available, for example Turkish GCSE and a mobile facility, the IT Bus. These classes have had demonstrable effects on supporting and improving the self-esteem of children and their parents.

69. The multi-agency integrated strategy for children works well and supports parents effectively. Professionals are clear about their roles and, where appropriate, meet regularly to nominate a lead professional to whom parents can relate most easily. There is an increasing range of good quality childcare and nursery education available. Effective information, guidance and training is on hand for early years providers, and children are well prepared to meet the early learning goals.

70. Support for school improvement is strong and appropriate action is being taken to address areas of weakness within the curriculum and schools, with the result that the number of schools causing concern has been radically reduced. However, two secondary PRUs are in special measures and, although they are now making good progress, the role and purpose of Islington PRUs lack clarity. Detailed analysis of achievement and progress is undertaken and there has been effective support for pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, with the result that good progress has been made by black minority ethnic and Turkish pupils. Standards of attainment at each key stage are below national averages but the rate of progress and/or value added at the different key stages is overall above the national average. Overall, pupils are making better progress in each successive year. The gap between attainment nationally and in Islington is narrowing.

71. Admission arrangements to schools are appropriate and there are sufficient places for all Islington pupils. Priority arrangements are in place for children in need and looked after children and there are effective procedures for tracking pupils as they move school. Targeted action is taken to promote attendance, which, in secondary schools, is now in line with the national average. However, primary school attendance is below the national average and the strategies in place are having limited impact. Specialist learning support services are well regarded by schools and parents. Support for behaviour is available and schools are managing behaviour effectively with exclusions below the national average. Strong partnerships with business, statutory and voluntary agencies are influential in raising aspirations and attainment and there are many volunteer readers and mentors working in schools. A Black Educators Network is actively promoting equalities.

72. The educational provision for children who do not attend school is effectively monitored and tracked. This is particularly effective with regard to young people who offend. Pupils educated at home are regularly visited and the educational support provided for children who do not attend school for medical reasons is of a very good standard.

73. The great majority of children and young people, even in the most deprived areas, enjoy living in Islington. They value the range of opportunities for enjoyment and personal development afforded by living in close proximity to such renowned venues as The London Symphony Orchestra, Sadler's Wells and The Barbican. Many, representing a good cross section of the diverse communities in Islington, have attended these venues to participate in performances and continue to seek opportunities to attend events. There is a wealth of leisure and holiday activities available for all ages within the borough. A very good proportion, about one in three young people, participate in youth provision where they achieve well. Easy access to places of interest, sports and culture are also highly valued by children, young people and their parents. The local *IZZ Card* discount scheme is considered to be instrumental in accessing them.

74. Effective multi-agency procedures are in place to ensure that looked after children are well supported and attainment at school is optimised. Their attainment and attendance come within the national acceptable band but are higher than England averages for this group of children and young people. Priority admission arrangements to schools are made for them, and their educational progress and attendance is tracked well. Personal education plans are of a good quality and support learning, with additional tuition and support available when required. An excellent staff handbook, *Raising the educational achievement of children and young people in public care*, ensures that all staff are aware of the shared multi-disciplinary professional roles, vision, procedures and practices in place to support their achievement.

75. Inclusion of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disability is well supported and promoted by the authority. Good quality multi-agency support and provision is available to them and their parents/carers, and an excellent *Children's Directory* provides a wealth of helpful information in a user-friendly fashion. Islington has chosen special education as the focus for its participation in the national pilot scheme to provide free education for two year olds. Effective administrative procedures are in place to identify, assess and make provision for them and a range of independent advocacy is available if required. There is a good geographical spread of accessible and inclusive schools. In addition, special schools are increasingly co-located with mainstream provision. Good progress is made by children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Special schools are supported well by the wider business and commercial community and reading volunteers and mentors are in place. Specialist clubs and out of school activities are also available and enjoyed by children and young people.

Making a positive contribution

76. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. There is very good support for children and young people's social, emotional and personal development in Islington.

Professionals provide constructive role models and adults act as learning and behaviour mentors. Positive relationships between adults and children and young people are evident in all care, education and recreation settings, although there is an impact on friendships due to the significant proportion (40%) of pupils who do not continue from primary to secondary schools in the borough. Racial incident and other harassment monitoring arrangements are rigorous and incidence is falling. From an early age children show high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. Parents who are having difficulty maintaining good relationships with their children have access to appropriate skilled support in CAMHS and the Youth Offending Service and through children's centres.

77. Children and young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups, are supported well in managing changes and responding to challenges in their lives. There is a good range of initiatives to support young people in the normal transitions to school and when changing schools. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported by knowledgeable staff when moving on between settings. Looked after children are supported intensively when changing placements and are a priority admissions group. Some children and young people help each other in schools through schemes such as playground angels and buddying. There are some useful initiatives to support children arriving mid-term or mid-phase, for instance peer mentors for unaccompanied asylum seekers. There are tailored group and individual support programmes to help specific groups facing more than the normal challenges of life, such as young carers. Teenage parents are helped to stay in school before the birth of their children.

78. The opportunities for children and young people to contribute positively to the wider community are increasingly wide and varied. There are good opportunities for volunteering through sports and youth activities. Many children take part in charity fundraising in schools and these events are often pupil organised, if not pupil initiated. There is an outstanding example of young people initiating a crime prevention mentoring scheme with the help of the YMCA in the voluntary sector.

79. The participation of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in reviews of services provided for them and plans for their future is satisfactory. Looked after children are creatively helped by CAIS to contribute to their reviews and contribute to corporate parenting and the management of services for looked after children and care leavers. Their collective and individual views are effectively promoted. Involvement in the recruitment of social workers and adoptive parents is becoming the norm.

80. There is a clear commitment of councillors and the Board to drive consultation and participation forward. Opportunities are varied. Some children and young people are consulted on strategic matters, regeneration schemes and the CYPP, although issues are now outdated and consultation needs to be refreshed. Youth workers have facilitated consultation with young people in housing projects, although issues are not always directed at the interests of young people. Young people are not always clear about what is done with their ideas or how their participation makes a difference. Structures to coordinate and support participation through Listen Up are at an early stage of development. Many take part in democratic activity relevant to their age group. Nearly all schools have a school council but best practice is not routinely shared. There are few examples of young people effectively involved in helping to manage and quality assure services.

81. Joint action to reduce antisocial behaviour is sound and diversionary activities are closely targeted at hotspots. Comprehensive antibullying policies and successful schemes such as the Anti-Bullying Massif programme in one school are in place, although some secondary schools still report bullying as a concern. There is a good understanding in the area of the benefits of offering an attractive range of free or affordable positive activities to reduce antisocial behaviour. Sports and holiday playschemes have high levels of attendance but management information across partnerships is not sufficiently detailed to have an exact measure of success. Some activities suffer from opportunistic funding that is insufficiently tied to needs analysis, and benefits are not sustained. Antisocial Behaviour Orders, Antisocial Behaviour Contracts and the ABC+ scheme have worked well.

82. The improving work of the Youth Offending Service and partners is having a good impact. Although the rate of crime committed by young people is higher than that found nationally, the Youth Offending Service has made good progress to reduce the numbers of young people offending for the first time from 282 to 200 in a one-year period. This is above and beyond the national target. There is not so great an impact on reducing re-offending. Although there has been limited recent improvement, the rate of re-offending is not falling consistently and is higher than the target the area has set for itself. Once offenders are in the youth justice system, they make good gains on wider health and education outcomes. This is particularly the case for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities including mental ill-health. There is sustained good performance for the low numbers of looked after children who offend, and very few re-offend.

Achieving economic well-being

83. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is adequate.** Effective action is taken by partners to support families in maximizing their economic well-being. Families and carers have access to a good range of information, advice and support about childcare provision and benefits. Take-up of the educational maintenance

allowance and other benefits is good. There is an increasing number of flexible, good quality childcare places available through a diverse range of providers. Sure Start provision is conveniently located and clear plans have been established to develop children's centres across the borough in relation to need. Many settings make good use of parents and carers as volunteers and some have progressed into paid employment. A good range of family learning courses are available in a wide range of venues and are widening participation in education and training. A high proportion of children live in households where no one is working. There is insufficiently well-coordinated information, advice and guidance on learning opportunities for parents and carers to develop employment-related skills and support progression into employment.

84. The level of support provided for young people to help them prepare for work is increasing and is satisfactory overall. The local Education Business Partnership has a good range of work experience opportunities available to young people including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A good variety of work-related learning programmes are offered in schools including the effective use of business mentors in four schools. Careers advice and guidance provided by schools and Connexions Personal Advisers to young people is satisfactory. There are many good and varied projects to raise aspirations, prepare young people for working life and re-engage those who do not attend school regularly. These include workshops at City University, Aim Higher projects, pre- and post-entry to employment projects and an employment and training scheme for care leavers. There is not yet sufficient coordination of the varied projects to ensure they meet the needs of different groups of young people.

85. There is a good and growing awareness amongst all partners about the need to reduce the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training. An action group has been established as part of the new 14–19 arrangements and a local data manager has been appointed to make better use of the information collected by Connexions services. Strategies and systems for tracking and monitoring young people are improving. The proportion of young people whose employment or training status is not known to Connexions services has recently improved and is now in line with Central London averages. Whilst vulnerable groups are a priority for services under 16 and there are good initiatives in mentoring, these are not reflected in the outcomes. Participation in education, employment and training by some vulnerable groups, including those leaving care, teenage mothers and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is much lower than for their age peers in the borough.

86. Satisfactory action is being taken to ensure that 14–19 education and training is planned and delivered in a coordinated way. The recent appointment of a 14–19 Director has provided renewed clarity and much needed leadership to the 14–19 partnership. A strategy is being developed and partners are committed to developing a comprehensive 14–19 offer. Task groups are well supported by stakeholders. All secondary schools offer at least one vocational programme at Key Stage 4. An increasing number of young people are

participating in vocational programmes either at schools, local colleges or training providers. The 14–19 partnership is aware of the limitations in local vocational provision and is planning to develop appropriate collaborative partnerships to deliver some of the new specialised Diplomas. The partnership has successfully developed a pathfinder project for career pathways in health and social care.

87. City and Islington College is a very successful college and some of the courses are over-subscribed. The college guarantees places to young people from six Islington schools if they meet the entry criteria. The arrangements for young people transferring from schools to the college at 16 are highly effective, particularly for young people leaving care. The college is very responsive to local needs and has increased entry level and level 1 provision to meet demands. Although satisfactory action is being taken to secure a wider learner entitlement and good plans are in place, the current curriculum offer and progression pathways do not yet fulfil local plans. School sixth forms offer few qualifications below level 3. There are some gaps in the range of provision in terms of subjects and levels, such as provision for learners with complex or profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities, hospitality and catering, and the variety of progression routes to and from E2E. Action is being taken to increase the number of local vocational education opportunities in sectors which provide significant employment opportunities, such as construction.

88. There are several major regeneration initiatives and effective environmental projects in the borough. The main building contractors for regeneration and building projects are also effective at promoting construction trades as a career and recruiting young people onto apprenticeship programmes. Regeneration and neighbourhood renewal is effectively linked with community services, environment, social services and community safety. Families and young people are routinely consulted at the planning and design phases. As developments progress most decisions are taken by resident groups which do not adequately represent the diverse range of children, young people and families.

89. The council recognises a high proportion of children live in overcrowded accommodation. A multi-agency strategy has been developed to help ease the situation while planning to increase the supply of larger homes in the longer term. Effective actions include re-converting single units back into family units, incentives to encourage people in under-occupied family houses to move to smaller units, and a 'new generation scheme' to move young adults into their own accommodation. The council is making satisfactory progress in meeting the decent homes standards. There is a lack of available and affordable housing compared to demand. Appropriate actions are in place to try and minimise homelessness and semi-independent accommodation or additional support arrangements are available for vulnerable young people.

90. Looked after children are well supported in preparing for working life and in ensuring placement moves do not disrupt exam entry. Good quality assessments and pathway plans are prepared for looked after children to ensure appropriate support and supervision through transition to adult services. Some jobs in the council are offered to care leavers. The transition arrangements for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are satisfactory, although comparatively low numbers remain in education, employment or training. There is good support and information for parents and carers of children on direct payments and the take up is increasing.

Service management

91. **The management of services for children and young people is good. The capacity to improve further is also good.** The ambitions for children and young people in Islington are good. The council and strategic partners have established high ambitions to deliver better outcomes through the CYPP. The leader of the council and individual councillors are passionate about raising achievement and the quality of life for children and young people in the area. The council has provided leadership for the better integration of services, for instance through the well-supported Building Schools for the Future programme. Partners base their ambition on sound understanding of inequalities, diversity and mobility of the population, and the crowded nature of the borough. The council, schools and other partners have well developed innovative approaches to addressing diversity and deprivation.

92. Prioritisation to improve outcomes for children and young people is adequate. The leader and mayor are clear that children and young people are a priority for the council. The local area agreement and the One Islington approach are driving priorities, and the council has well developed preventative services. The Safer Islington Partnership prioritises well. The council is channelling additional resources into children's services and successfully using S106 monies and government priorities for the benefit of local people. Nevertheless, some children and young people are not confident that they are a priority in the area in some examples of regeneration improvement. The CYPP has 37 priority objectives and actions are not always sufficiently focused on specific objectives. Some staff are clear about how their work is delivering the council's strategic vision and there are some excellent examples of matching provision to need but this is not consistent.

93. The overall capacity of the council and its partners is good. The council works well with a wide range of strategic and local partners to improve outcomes for children and young people. The leader of the council is highly regarded and knowledgeable. The capacity of the council is strongly enhanced by CEA@Islington and it provides strong leadership to schools. There is a positive working relationship between the council, CEA and schools, well illustrated by the Audit Commission's positive school survey returns. The formidable energy of the private, voluntary and community sectors greatly extends the council's capacity. Arsenal Football Club's impressive contribution to

the area ranging from sports to health and education projects is only one example. Faith and community-based supplementary schools are widespread.

94. Elected councillors take their corporate parenting responsibilities extremely seriously. CEA has a strong senior management team and schools and children's services are well resourced and well staffed following focused initiatives. The council and PCT are moving towards joint management of services for children with disabilities in order to deliver better and more cost effective services. There is yet little alignment of children's services budgets and no formal shared budgets although the present shadow joint-budget arrangement for high-cost placements works well. The children and families' services budget has been overspent in recent years as have some school budgets but these are being actively managed to eliminate overspends.

95. Value for money is adequate. Spend is often above that of similar councils. Education and health outcomes are below average but there is a strong record of improvement in a challenging context. There are comparatively good education and health outcomes for looked after children. The council is effectively tackling the high number of looked after children and high costs, for example by improving local capacity. Schools are well resourced and the Schools' Forum has formally agreed to a substantial central retention of their budgets to support the shortfall in funding for the Building Schools for the Future programme. The council knows that value for money is an urgent issue; CEA, for example, has a clear cost-saving requirement built into contract arrangements.

96. Performance management is adequate. There is a strong commitment to drive up performance by all of Islington's stakeholders. CEA's annual plan is a good basis for performance management and its arrangements are well regarded. The council and partners produce clear performance reports which are appropriately shared. Target setting is being further refined by CEA following extensive consultation with schools. Quality assurance processes have led to real improvements, for example in Young People's Services. The use of performance information to improve good practice is well evidenced in social care and with schools. This is effectively helping, for example, to reduce the number of looked after children and children on the child protection register and to raise achievement amongst identified groups of Black and minority ethnic pupils.

97. Case management in social care is generally good. There are highly effective processes for CRB checks amongst statutory partners. The council knows that there is still more to do to ensure that performance management is consistently results-focused and that governance and accountability arrangements for Every Child Matters groups are well understood. Linkages between plans remain complex and not all plans are specific enough or easily measurable.

98. The Corporate Parenting Board is actively developing its approach to the involvement of children and young people. Young people were heavily involved in the Children's Commission. There are some good examples of children and young people's involvement in the management and quality assurance of services. Despite this, young people's engagement is not always consistent and meaningful. Although some young people were involved in specific workshops to discuss agreed priorities and actions during the development of the CYPP their involvement is not yet sufficiently systematic.

99. The capacity of the council and its partners to improve further is good. Improvement in educational attainment is often significantly above that of other local authorities. There is now a sound understanding amongst councillors and officers of the many strategic and operational issues facing children's services. The council welcomes and responds positively to external challenge and uses well the expertise of others to improve further the council's approach. For example, the Children's Commission has greatly added to understanding of the matters that need addressing. The council has scrutinised a wide range of issues which affect children and young people. Implementation of recommendations is effectively monitored. The capacity of stakeholders is used well and parents and volunteers are actively involved in the management of community projects.

100. The council can take difficult decisions. There are ambitious academy and school building programmes. The council's approach to strategic commissioning and workforce planning are building well on existing expertise. There is clear and comprehensive published information for stakeholders to help them take informed decisions. The council has carefully nurtured the involvement of statutory partners in the Every Child Matters agenda, and the Children's Board is working appropriately towards Children's Trust-type arrangements through section 31 agreements. There has been slow progress on developing a common assessment framework and information sharing, partly because of the lack of a robust ICT infrastructure. This hinders cooperation at a local level.

101. The council's self-assessment for the joint area review was broadly in line with our findings but over-positive for outcome 4, making a positive contribution, and also capacity to improve.

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

1. Services provided by the council and its partners for children and young people are good. Children and young people are generally safe and those most at risk are well protected. Until recent years, outcomes were poorer overall for children and young people in Islington than nationally or in similar local authority areas. Outcomes are now adequate. Many outcomes have improved steadily over the last five years, in some cases faster than national trends or in similar authorities. This progress reflects the collective action of the council and partners to improve services. Their capacity to further improve standards and services is good.

2. The management of services for children and young people is good. The council and strategic partners have established high ambitions to deliver better outcomes through the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). The council has given leadership for the better integration of services, for instance through the well-supported Building Better Schools for the Future programme. Councillors are highly ambitious for the area. Partners base their ambition on a sound understanding of inequalities, diversity and mobility of the population, and the crowded nature of the borough. Prioritisation to improve outcomes for children and young people is adequate. The council is channelling additional resources into children's services. Nevertheless, the CYPP has 37 priority objectives, and action is not always sufficiently focused on specific objectives.

3. The impressive energy of the private, voluntary and community sectors contribute to the good capacity of the council and strategic partners. Spend is above that of similar councils in many performance areas, although the scale and pace of improvement indicate adequate value for money overall. Existing expertise and proven partnership arrangements underpin the council's approach to strategic commissioning and workforce planning. Nevertheless, the council has been slow to develop a common assessment framework and information sharing, impacting negatively on communication at a local level. Service delivery and individual performance is well managed. Management information reporting through a complex range of accountable groups is adequate. Good initiatives to engage young people are not always sustained.

4. Most children and young people are healthy but poorer outcomes and inequalities reflect the representation of children and young people among the borough's deprived communities. Levels of obesity and tooth decay are high. Although still worse than the averages for England, rates for low birth weights, immunisation and early infant mortality have improved gradually over a three year period. Partners work well together to secure good healthcare, particularly for looked after children and those with disabilities. Integrated working is highly successful for children under five and their families in the Sure Start areas and through children's centres. Child and adolescent mental health services provide effective outreach. Schools and the council's Young People's Services encourage active, healthy lifestyles for high proportions of youngsters.

5. Children and young people appear safe. Sound risk assessment and staff vetting procedures provide safeguards in care, education and recreation. Most young people say they feel safe nearly everywhere except at night. With comparatively high proportions of children at risk, those most at risk of abuse or harm are actively protected through well-considered multi-agency work across services. The council's children's services department provides good support for looked after children and those on the child protection register. Children benefit from regular and frequent visits by supervising social workers. Good emphasis is placed on stability of placements and moves to find permanent carers.

6. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation, and to achieve, is good. Outcomes are adequate. Effective partnership between the council and CEA@Islington, appointed by the Secretary of State to run education from 1999, has brought about significant improvement in support to schools and pupils. The direction has now been lifted and a new contract agreed between the council and CEA. From a very low base, the quality of provision in schools is improving and the gap between Islington and comparable authorities is narrowing. Attendance of primary pupils and the quality of pupil referral units are concerns. Early years education support is effective. Support for looked after children is good. Inclusion is a high priority, with many pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities educated in mainstream schools. Children and young people enjoy living in Islington and many participate in a wide range of quality youth and recreational activities.

7. Children and young people are encouraged to develop positive relationships and make a positive contribution. Children facing additional challenges such as disability and unaccompanied asylum seekers are intensively supported by skilled adults. Many children and young people help others settle into new circumstances and behave well. Although nearly all children and young people take part in reviews of services that affect them directly, strategic consultation is not yet fully embedded across all aspects of council and partnership working. There are effective anti-bullying and harassment policies. Agencies including the Metropolitan Police and the Youth Offending Service work well together to address antisocial behaviour, to provide positive alternatives for leisure time and prevent young people offending. The number of young people offending for the first time is falling and although there has been some limited success in reducing the rate at which young people re-offend the rate is still above the local target.

8. Opportunities for children and young people to achieve economic well-being and prepare for working life are adequate. There is very good access to information and a good range of flexible day care for parents who are working or studying. With the appointment of a 14–19 Strategic Director a good start has been made on partnership working. Attainment of young people by age 19 is below similar areas. There are not enough routes to progress through levels of qualification within the borough. The proportion of young people age 16 to 18 not in employment, education or training is improving but continues to be high compared to central London averages. There are good initiatives to mentor vulnerable groups. Work placements are provided in the council for looked after children and links are made with local universities for them. Regeneration initiatives are improving general environmental conditions for children and young people but high proportions of families live in overcrowded accommodation. Families and young people do not benefit from the newly generated jobs in great numbers.