

Joint area review

**London Borough of Sutton Children's Services Authority
Area**

Review of services for children and young people

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

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

Context

3. The London Borough of Sutton is one of the smaller London boroughs and is situated on the southern outskirts of the capital. It has a relatively small population of approximately 184,400 of whom 46,000 are aged between 0 and 19 years. Geographically the borough covers a relatively small area, which, although it is urban, contains many acres of green spaces. The majority of the population is White British, with 20% from Black and minority ethnic groups, which is much lower than the London average of 42%. Approximately one in five of 0 to 15 year olds in the borough are from Black and minority ethnic groups, with children and young people of mixed, Asian, Asian British and Black and Black British making up the largest numbers.

4. Sutton is a borough of contrasts. While there are many affluent areas it also has some areas, notably in the north and south-east of the borough, where there are significant levels of social and economic deprivation. Unemployment at 2.6% is one of the lowest levels in London. Over 60% of the resident workforce is classified as professional, managerial or skilled non-manual.

5. Pre-16 education provision comprises:
 - 70 private or voluntary early years setting
 - 10 designated children's centres
 - two nursery schools
 - 41 primary schools
 - 14 secondary schools
 - three special schools
 - two pupil referral units.
6. Post-16 education and training is provided by:
 - one further education college

- one specialist college
- 14 school sixth forms
- three work-based training providers
- one special school.

7. The authority maintains resourced specialist provision (opportunity bases) for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities:

Pre-16:

- one within a nursery school
- six within primary schools
- three within secondary schools.

Post-16:

- one within a secondary school.

8. Entry to Employment provision is managed by Sutton Connexions controlling 888 places.

9. Adult and community learning, including family learning is provided by Sutton College for Learning for Adults.

10. Primary and community health is provided by Sutton and Merton Trust and acute hospital services are provided by Epsom and St Helier University Hospital NHS Trust.

11. Mental health services are provided by South West London and St George's Mental Health Trust.

12. Children's social care services are provided through: 75 foster carers, one family centre, and 11 field social work teams. There are no children's residential care homes, although regular use is made of an external provider in the borough.

13. There are no young offender institutions in the area.

Main findings

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

- Arrangements to safeguard children and young people are good. Partner agencies collaborate well to safeguard children and young people through a wide range of good multi-agency, early intervention and protective services overseen by the well-established Sutton Local Safeguarding Children Board (Sutton LSCB). This has resulted in good safeguarding outcomes for Sutton children overall and improvements in most of those outcomes which are adequate.

However, audit of practice across partners is insufficiently systematic and robust and the range of information for the public on safeguarding issues is underdeveloped. Good inter-agency referral and assessment processes and communication are in place, but referral and re-referral rates remain high.

- Services for looked after children are adequate. Numbers are low and steadily reducing and most children are placed with foster carers in the borough. The quality of foster care provided is good; however, short-term placements are insufficiently stable. Health assessments are very good. Educational attainment is adequate overall, but the take-up of education and training by care leavers is declining. Young people are not systematically engaged in evaluation and planning of services and the role of corporate parent is insufficiently developed.
- Services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. The Children, Young People and Learning Services are building effectively upon their experiences as a Pathfinder Trust for disabled children to further improve services. Very good multi-disciplinary working underpins high quality support in the early years. Some barriers exist in accessing information and children and young people are not consistently involved in shaping and evaluating services. Whilst the proportion of children and young people with statements of special educational need (SEN) remains above the national average and a significant number of these attend schools outside the borough, good plans are in place to reverse this situation.
- Service management is good. Ambitions are based on a thorough needs analysis. Children and young people are increasingly consulted, but the consistent engagement of more vulnerable groups in service planning and evaluation requires further consolidation. Priorities are appropriate, owned by the partnership and supported by the redirection of resources to areas of need, but the pace of change in some areas has been slow. Capacity is good and enhanced by good partnership working and strong financial management. Performance management is good overall, although underdeveloped in some services.
- The partnership has good capacity for further improvement. While it has a strong track record of improving outcomes overall, some improvements for vulnerable groups of children and young people have been more gradual. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) is ambitious and priorities are clear and appropriate, but some strategies are new and have yet to impact. Value for money is good. Service managers provide strong leadership. Most services have sufficient staff to deliver plans and improvements.

Grades

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

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

Recommendations

For immediate action

The local partnership should:

- ensure that an appropriate way is found for the successful dissemination of the findings of this report to children and young people in the area
- ensure the Sutton LSCB develops and embeds systematic and robust audit processes across its partners.

For action over the next six months

The local partnership should:

- increase the pace of development of the corporate parenting role and enhance member engagement with looked after children and care leavers
- improve engagement in the production of, access to and the systematic and timely dissemination of information for looked after children and young people and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities so that they are better enabled to make informed decisions about their needs and plans
- ensure the Sutton LSCB develop a communication strategy and materials to inform Sutton residents about safeguarding issues, taking account of feedback from children and their parents or carers
- review the referral thresholds for access to the Referral and Assessment Services and community based early intervention and

prevention services to reduce the number of referrals and re-referrals coming to the Referral and Assessment Services; in particular with regard to domestic violence

- sustain and secure improvements in placement stability for looked after children and young people.

For action in the longer term

The local partnership should:

- ensure that systems and structures are in place at every level to consistently involve children and young people, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are looked after, in the design, delivery and evaluation of services
- reduce the proportion of children and young people with a statement of special educational needs that are placed in independent and non-maintained special schools and increase the proportion that are included in provision in the authority
- increase the range and volume of supported housing in the borough for care leavers and sustain the improved access to suitable accommodation.

Equality and diversity

15. Priorities in the CYPP give appropriate attention to equality and diversity issues. However, the extent to which equality and diversity informs service development, delivery and is actively promoted across the partnership is inconsistent. For example, the website does not meet disability standards and a small number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been permanently excluded from school before an appropriate alternative placement has been found for them. Children and young people are increasingly consulted, but their consistent engagement in service planning and evaluation requires further consolidation. Neither younger children nor a sufficiently diverse range of vulnerable children and young people are effectively involved. The partnership recognises that the depth and range of their engagement is limited and has taken action to address this. The attainment gap for many groups of minority ethnic pupils is narrowing, but this is not the case across all key stages for children and young people who are looked after.

16. A range of written information is available for parents and their children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but some find it difficult to access this independently. The proportion of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities included in local provision is below that found in similar authorities. Plans to increase provision to meet the increasing need in the borough for children across the autistic spectrum are comprehensive and well on track.

Safeguarding



17. **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>Outcome measures for safeguarding are good overall.</p> <p>Well-established and mostly effective Sutton LSCB.</p> <p>Good multi-agency collaboration, networking and communication to safeguard children.</p> <p>Good community-based early intervention and preventative services.</p> <p>Well-managed referral and assessment services.</p> <p>Good safe recruitment practices in the council, its partners and commissioned services.</p> <p>Good private fostering arrangements.</p> <p>Good identification and support for vulnerable pregnant women and their families.</p>	<p>Alignment of thresholds between referral and assessment and the early intervention service, resulting in high levels of referrals and re-referrals.</p> <p>The auditing of safeguarding practices across partners by the Sutton LSCB is not sufficiently systematic or robust.</p> <p>Underdeveloped range of information available to Sutton residents on safeguarding issues.</p>

18. Most children in Sutton who responded to a recent national survey reported feeling safe, and the council has taken appropriate measures to address issues where some children expressed concerns, in particular with regards to bullying and fear of crime. Effective road safety initiatives have led to year-on-year reductions in traffic accidents involving children, six children were killed or seriously injured in 2006, 72% below the 1994/98 baseline.

19. Health promotion in schools and the Youth Offending Service is good. A very high proportion of schools have achieved Healthy Schools status and all schools in the borough are working towards it. There are good examples of public health initiatives such as smoking cessation, reducing obesity and Chlamydia screening, but the impact of these is not shared widely across the

partner organisations. Good health outcomes for all expectant mothers and their babies are reflected by: low infant mortality rates in babies and infants, low levels of babies born with low birth rates, high levels of mothers initiating breast feeding and high immunisation rates. The provision of oral health programmes for children and young people in Sutton is good. While emergency and primary care for children and young people are good, the ratio of staff to children on the children's ward at the acute trust is well below the national average. Good progress is being made in reducing under-18 conceptions, with the rates of conceptions being significantly lower than national and comparator averages. However, the downward trend has recently plateaued and the teenage pregnancy strategy is not consistently embedded into other relevant strategies, such as integrated youth support and extended services.

20. Partnership and communication between the council and health services are good and enhanced by some jointly funded posts, some co-location of services and good working relationships between staff. For example, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provide a comprehensive integrated service, with staff providing good direct work and advice within a variety of community-based services. Access for specialist cases is timely and good.

21. Procedures and practice to identify children who are missing from school, care, or their home are good and follow-up of non-attendance is thorough and timely. Young people missing education are tracked and their engagement monitored. Alongside good alternative education provision, information provided by the partnership indicates that the Vulnerable Pupils' Panel is very effective in reducing permanent exclusions with a marked reduction from 51 in the year June 2006/07 to 34 in June 2007/08. Overall fixed-term exclusions have reduced from 1115 for the academic year 2006/07 to 914 for 2007/08.

22. The council has a strong culture of working in partnership and there is a good range of family support services in the borough with a clear investment in early intervention and prevention. The integrated children's centres provide diverse multi-agency services in localities that parents find easy to access. The Common Assessment Framework is being systematically rolled out, and is being appropriately and flexibly used, underpinned by good training and commitment from partners in the appointment of lead professionals.

23. Clear, well-coordinated multi agency arrangements and positive activities are in place to support vulnerable groups. In particular, there is good support to young people and their families exposed to domestic violence, young people at risk of bullying, and young people at risk of offending or anti social behaviour. A Children and Young People's Inclusion Support Panel (CYPISP) supports vulnerable 5-19 year olds, providing early intervention and prevention strategies through short-term individualised support packages. As a result, the number of looked after children receiving a final warnings, reprimands or convictions has reduced from 5.7% in 2003/04 to 2% in 2007/08. The Youth Offending Team works well with partner agencies to provide a good range of positive activities

to engage young people, with clear action planning and referral to appropriate initiatives to address offending behaviour. Actions to reduce the number of first time entrants to the criminal justice system are being successful and numbers have fallen from their previously high level.

24. The Sutton LSCB is well established and provides strong strategic leadership in developing the broader safeguarding agenda for the council and its partners. It is chaired by the council's Director of Children's Services with good multi-agency representation on the board and its sub-groups, including representation from voluntary sector partners. The Sutton LSCB has developed a detailed action plan with ambitious and achievable objectives, which are regularly reviewed. Good inter-agency policies, procedures and practice are underpinned by high quality training, which are overseen and developed through effective sub-groups. Partner agencies undertake internal quality assurance of safeguarding practice; however, the auditing of safeguarding practices across the partnership by the board is not yet sufficiently systematic and robust. A wide range of safeguarding information is provided for partner agencies, although information and publicity on safeguarding for members of the public, children and their carers is underdeveloped. The board has taken effective steps to raise awareness and ensure comprehensive arrangements for private fostering. The board has also ensured that effective safe recruitment procedures and practice is in place across the council, its partners, and commissioned services. Appropriate Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements are also in place.

25. Inter-agency communication and information sharing are secure, but result in a high volume of referrals to the Referral and Assessment Service. Many of these referrals are notifications, which do not result in initial or core assessments, but are appropriately passed on to other agencies for support, for example, the early notification of domestic violence. A high proportion of re-referrals are subsequently received, which the council has recently audited to ensure appropriate decisions were taken at the time of the first referral. However, it has not yet determined whether thresholds for referral to the Referral and Assessment Services or to the CYPISPs for early intervention and preventative services are appropriately aligned.

26. The referral and assessment services are well managed and structured. There is a good standard of recording in social care teams. Most assessments are thorough and of good quality and the transfer to other childcare teams smooth and timely. Good referral and assessment services are provided through the Children with Disabilities Team and within St Helier hospital. Arrangements for identifying vulnerable pregnant women are particularly effective and followed by a high standard of multi-agency assessment and pre-birth planning. Performance in the prompt completion of initial and core assessments has improved in 2007/08 and is now above the national average. Staff vacancies within social care teams have been well above those of similar areas and have resulted in the high use of locum staff in some teams, sometimes for long periods. This has affected the promptness of recording of information and

increased the need for managerial support to staff and involvement in cases. Caseloads are high, but manageable, and no unallocated cases were seen during the inspection. The council has recently been successful in recruiting more permanent social work staff, but they had not taken up their posts at the time of the inspection.

27. Good referral and response arrangements protect children who are most at risk. Procedures and practice are underpinned by high quality multi-agency training which is well attended by partners. An exception is the attendance of healthcare staff from the acute trust, who are insufficiently represented at multi-disciplinary training. Core group meetings and case conferences are well attended and managed and are informed by good quality reports. There are 139 children currently the subject of child protection plans; all have an allocated social worker and their cases are reviewed on time. Safe child protection practice has resulted in lower levels of de-registration and re-registration on the child protection register than in comparator authorities and national levels. Data for 2007/08 indicates a significant reduction in the percentage of children subject of child protection plans for over two years, to 1.1% from 10% in 2006/7, with good support continuing to be provided to children and their families following termination of their plan.

Looked after children and young people



28. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people is adequate.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Effective preventative actions have resulted in low numbers of looked after children.</p> <p>Good fostering and adoption services</p> <p>Good engagement of young people in statutory reviews.</p> <p>Smooth transition to the Leaving Care Team.</p> <p>Very good health care assessment and support arrangements.</p> <p>Good access to CAMHS provision.</p>	<p>The role of the corporate parent is insufficiently developed.</p> <p>Stability of short-term placements.</p> <p>Insufficient supported accommodation for care leavers</p> <p>Insufficient systematic engagement of young people in service planning and design.</p> <p>Insufficient access to information for young people or involvement in its creation.</p>

29. The overall number of children and young people looked after is consistently reducing and the ratio of looked after children against the wider child population is significantly below that of statistical neighbours and the national average. Partners are taking effective action to meet the needs of children at an early stage and appropriately avoid the need for children to be looked after. Gross expenditure on looked after children per capita aged under-18 fell in 2007/08, while that of similar authorities rose. Savings made in this area have been invested in the further development of preventative services.

30. The role of corporate parent is insufficiently developed and the pace of improvement in this area has been slow. Currently there are insufficient opportunities and mechanisms for councillors to meet their ambitions for looked after children and young people. Councillors receive in-house training about their corporate parenting responsibilities, but it does not directly involve children and young people. Councillors have no access to a systematic analysis of the views of looked after children and young people in the borough and information they have received about their educational attainment contains inaccuracies. The council recognises there are weaknesses in corporate parenting and is undertaking a review to improve the situation.

31. Good fostering and adoption services are in place. There is a good supply of foster placements in Sutton, which were judged to be of good quality by a recent Ofsted inspection. Foster carers are well supported and trained. Placements are sufficient to meet need and few new placements have been made more than 20 miles from Sutton in the last two years. The number of looked after children placed for adoption within 12 months of the agency deciding they should be is small and varies from year to year as does the number who are adopted. In 2007/08 18 out of 97 children were subject to adoption or special guardianship orders, a large increase on the previous year, and the local authority successfully met its adoption target. There have been no disruptions to adoption placements in the last six years.

32. Placement stability is adequate and actions taken to improve the long-term stability of placements have been successful. Regular analysis of the reasons for placement moves by managers, increased access to the psychology service for young people and carers, together for the provision of intensive additional support for young people excluded from school, have all contributed to this improvement. In 2007/08, the number of children looked after for more than two and a half years, who had been in the same placement for at least two years, or were placed for adoption, improved significantly to be in line with that of statistical neighbours and the national average (68.2% in Sutton compared with 67.5% in statistical neighbours). This reversed a three-year decline in performance which had fallen considerably below that of comparators. However, short-term placement stability has not improved for the last two years. The proportion of looked after children who experience three moves or more in a year, though below the 16% threshold, is greater than in similar authorities or nationally (15% in Sutton compared with 10% in statistical neighbours and 11% nationally).

33. In 2007/08, the local authority ensured all children and young people looked after were allocated a qualified social worker. Reviews are held in a timely fashion, interagency participation is good and a higher proportion of children and young people participate in their reviews than occurs in similar authorities. Carers and independent reviewing officers facilitate a variety of means of participation for young people. There are good arrangements for contact for looked after children with family members. However, a legacy of high social worker vacancies and staff turnover has adversely affected relationships with some looked after children and young people. Some young people who have been looked after for some time report they have experienced frequent changes of social worker, which has resulted in them being reluctant to engage in meaningful relationships with them.

34. Effective actions are taken to ensure looked after children and young people are healthy. Health assessments for looked after children are consistently very good. Young people have been afforded more control over the process of health reviews and greater equity of service has been achieved for those young people placed out of the borough through the use of dedicated nursing staff. Access to CAMHS via the Joint Adolescent Service is good and dedicated psychologists provide readily available, effective behavioural and emotional support. There is good take-up of educational and specialist psychological support by staff who experience difficulties in their work with individual young people. A range of separate health promotion activities are well used, but facilitated access to leisure and exercise facilities for young people and their foster families through Sutton's leisure centres has yet to be realised.

35. Educational outcomes for looked after children are satisfactory overall. Cohort numbers taking tests and examinations are small and this is reflected in the volatility of percentages of those achieving target standards. For example, the percentage of eligible Year 11 pupils taking at least one GCSE was in line with the national average in 2006/07, but considerably lower the previous year. Numbers attaining either one or more A* to G GCSEs or GNVQ equivalents are variable, but have been above the national average for the last two years. At Key Stage 2 the percentage of children gaining Level 4 in mathematics and English has declined over the last three years and none achieved Level 4 or above in English in 2007. Attainment at Key Stage 3 is improving and the gap between most Sutton children and those looked after has been closing for English and mathematics. Partnership work to improve educational outcomes is not sufficiently coordinated. All children have Personal Education Plans, but not all plans have targets that are sufficiently specific or measurable. Absence from school is monitored effectively and attendance has consistently improved and is now better than in similar authorities.

36. There is insufficient consistent engagement of looked after children and young people in consultation, evaluation and decision-making processes for service planning and design. While there are a range of processes through which looked after young people can make their voice heard by officers and

councillors and some evidence this has made a difference, their views are not collected and systematically analysed to inform service development. Knowledge of some services, for example the advocacy service, which is valued by those who use it, is not widespread. The majority accessing this service last year were over 16 years of age. Research commissioned to identify best ways to obtain views of the range of children looked after took a considerable time to report thus delaying progress. The *My Shout* magazine is valued by young people as a means of disseminating information to them. More generally, they do not consistently receive appropriate information in a systematically and timely way. Although some are consulted as to whether handbooks contain relevant information, they are not sufficiently engaged in the creation of a range of age-appropriate information.

37. Pathway Plans are in place and regularly reviewed and there is smooth transition to the Leaving Care Team. There is an appropriate range of post-16 learning provision to meet the needs and interests of looked after young people. Post-16 providers work in collaboration with Connexions personal advisors, schools and the pupil referral unit and are aware of young peoples' barriers to learning. Young people leaving care have good access onto Entry to Employment programmes. The percentage of care leavers in education, employment or training is above that in similar areas, but has gradually declined over the last three years and is now below the national average. The local further education college very effectively supports looked after asylum seeking young people learning English. The provision of a breakfast club has been particularly helpful and supportive in enabling them to develop and practise language skills.

38. The percentage of care leavers at age 19 who are living in suitable accommodation improved significantly in 2007/08, from a low base the previous year, to be just above that of statistical neighbours, but below the national average. However, insufficient supported accommodation is available for care leavers, particularly those with complex needs and considerable use is made of bed and breakfast accommodation out of the borough. Insufficient information is given to young people about options available to them in relation to housing. Steps have been taken to clarify the financial package available to care leavers, but there remains insufficient clarity about what young people aged 16 and over are expected to provide with the new 'independence allowance'.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Inadequate



Adequate



Good

Outstanding



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>Good data and needs analysis inform strategy and development of services.</p> <p>The role of the disability partnership in developing and commissioning a range of services.</p> <p>Very good multi-agency work in the early identification, assessment and support for children and their families.</p> <p>Effective and well targeted support for children and families provided by the Children with Disabilities Social Care Team.</p> <p>Good overall effectiveness of most schools and specialist provision.</p> <p>Effective challenge and support to schools provided by a very strong advice and improvement service.</p>	<p>The relatively high proportion of children and young people with a statement of special educational needs educated in independent and non-maintained special schools.</p> <p>Limited access to information and insufficient involvement in the design, delivery and evaluation of services.</p> <p>Insufficiently rigorous processes to ensure timely and sustained engagement with CAMHS.</p> <p>High levels of fixed-term exclusions from special schools.</p>

40. Very good multi-agency work, often initiated by the health service, ensures the early identification and assessment of children with more severe and complex difficulties. The Early Years Inclusion Support Team works very effectively with settings to ensure the early identification of children with less severe or emerging needs. Parents are particularly appreciative of the high quality guidance and support provided by the Portage Team and other specialist advisory services. Close links across the different professional groups ensure that social and equipment needs are quickly addressed.

41. The multi-disciplinary disability partnership works well with voluntary agencies and parent representatives to develop support for families. As a result of consultation with parents, good and increasingly flexible short break provision has been developed, with successful referrals increasing from 206 in 2003 to 375 in 2008. The provision available includes residential respite care, support in the home, including from outreach nurses, and family-to-family support. Growing use is made of direct payments to allow parents further flexibility and choice, with an increase in take up from 21 in 2005 to 119 in 2008. The partnership recognises that more individually tailored provision could further enhance the support it offers to families and has successfully bid for pathfinder status to extend respite care. Good palliative work is undertaken by

a small number of providers and important support is also sensitively offered to siblings.

42. Access to CAMHS services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate, but parents, headteachers and case tracking identified that access to specialist expertise can be problematic. Although new referrals are seen within the NHS target of 13 weeks, this is too long for some children and young people. Ensuring equal access to CAMHS for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is an area for development in the CYPP. Steps have been taken to improve the quality of care pathways and to provide additional training for clinical staff. A post of CAMHS worker has been created within the Children with Disabilities Team. There is no set policy to ensure that once referrals have been made to CAMHS missed appointments are followed up. Consequently, this can result in young people at risk being removed from the appointments list and requiring re-referral. Future access is dependent on the availability of a professional (often a social worker) to encourage or support attendance. Once they are in treatment, the therapeutic support provided is valued by families.

43. The creation of children's centres, around which teams are grouped, is showing good early impact, particularly in the early years where parents describe access to advice and support as having 'improved massively' since their inception. Key workers or lead professionals play an important and increasingly effective role in streamlining services for families. The contribution made by social workers is identified by parents and carers as being particularly successful in negotiating more personalised packages with positive outcomes.

44. A high proportion of children with a statement of SEN are placed in independent and non-maintained special schools, most of which are out-of-authority schools, and a lower proportion attend the borough's maintained mainstream and special schools. The partnership has rightly identified certain trends in the growth of some areas of learning difficulties and/or disabilities, most particularly across the autistic spectrum where the number of new diagnoses has doubled over the past five years. It is taking appropriate action to increase the amount of resourced provision to meet this increasing range of need within its selective education system. As yet, although the concept of inclusion is increasingly promoted, it has not reduced the percentage of children and young people with a statement, which remains higher than that of similar authorities and the national average. The rate of appeals to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal rose from 16 in 2005/06 to 23 in 2006/07. However, the proportion of children with new statements who are placed in maintained schools in the borough has increased to above that of statistical neighbours. This increase reflects the authority's determination to ensure appropriate placements are made in local provision. Opportunity bases, at Amy Johnson and Stanley Park schools, are becoming more popular and there are indications that parental preference for this will continue to strengthen as the newly created bases become more established.

45. Too many children with statements of SEN are being excluded from mainstream and special schools. Fixed-term exclusions from primary and secondary schools are above those of statistical neighbours, but below the national average. Fixed-term exclusions from special schools are very high. There has been a small, but encouraging, reduction in permanent and fixed term exclusions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in secondary schools, reflecting the increasingly collaborative approach of the headteacher members of the Vulnerable Pupils Panel. This panel receives appropriate input from the Behaviour Support Team and is supported by the arrangements which are in place for special and mainstream schools to share good practice. However, the numbers of children and young people with identified disabilities and needs remains imbalanced between schools, reflecting, at secondary level, the selective system in Sutton, and the proportion that are excluded remains high in relation to pupils without learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Recent examples exist of a small number of such pupils being permanently excluded before an appropriate alternative placement was found for them, which is contrary to the spirit of both the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice and the Disability Discrimination Act (1995, amended 2001).

46. A very strong advice and inspection service, which is highly regarded by schools, monitors school effectiveness and analyses data to challenge schools, identify and target areas of support, and raise standards. Attainment of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are working within national curriculum levels is well tracked and effective work has been done to close the attainment gap between different groups. Good overall effectiveness of most schools and specialist provision enables the large majority of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress. Special schools provide very well for their pupils and the authority is appropriately working with these to develop a more cohesive and moderated system to track the individual progress of pupils working below national curriculum levels to determine the quality of provision and the value for money they provide.

47. Appropriately independent advocacy services for parents requiring assistance with SEN procedures and practice are available through the parent partnership. Parents speak well of this service and also of the parent-to-parent befriender scheme, staffed by parent volunteers. A range of written information is available for parents and their children, but some find it difficult to access this independently. Whilst some good consultation processes are in place, and have been effective in seeking and responding to the views of children and young people with disabilities, they have been less successful in reaching other groups, particularly those with challenging behaviour. Systems for obtaining a representative opinion from children and young people with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not fully embedded at every stage of the design, development and evaluation of service delivery.

48. The partnership has successfully commissioned a comprehensive range of out-of-school and holiday activities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and good arrangements are in place to include their siblings where appropriate. The Commissioning Group is now looking at ways to extend choice and availability of provision for those with the most complex and challenging needs, to make mainstream activities more accessible and to address any transport difficulties which inhibit full participation.

49. Arrangements to ensure the smooth transition for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from children's to adult services and into post-16 education or training are satisfactory. Advocacy work is encouraging a stronger alignment between children's social care and adult services and the transition unit is appropriately developing ways in which young people can take more control over their needs and plans, with encouraging but early impact.

50. The development of provision for more vulnerable groups has been challenging for the 14-19 strategic partnership. A more recent focus on learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is improving post-16 choices and there has been a good, steady decrease in the numbers of 16-19 year olds who are not in education, employment or training from 15.5% in 2004/05 to 10.9% in 2006/07, well below statistical neighbours. Information provided by the partnership indicates this decrease is being sustained and improved. Good collaborative work between the local further education college and the specialist college is leading to new provision which is due to open in December 2008.

Service Management



Capacity to improve



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Clear and challenging ambitions, agreed with partners, that are based on local needs and national priorities.</p> <p>Innovative and creative leadership to address local challenges.</p> <p>Good examples of resources being redirected to new priorities and investment in early intervention and preventative services.</p> <p>Strong and visible leadership provided by senior managers.</p> <p>Good partnership working. Children's Trust arrangements at a mature stage of development.</p> <p>Strong financial management across the partnership.</p>	<p>Inconsistent involvement of more vulnerable children and young people in service design, development and evaluation.</p> <p>The slow pace of change to bring about improvements in areas such as corporate parenting, integrated youth support, aspects of the 14-19 agenda.</p> <p>Underdeveloped performance management in some services.</p>

52. The ambition of the council and its partners for children and young people in Sutton is good. The council and its partners share challenging and realistic ambitions for children and young people that are clearly set out in the CYPP. The ambitions are strongly supported by statutory and voluntary and community partners. These are firmly set out in the community strategy and the new Local Area Agreement (LAA).

53. The CYPP is based on a thorough analysis of needs which has taken into account the views of children and young people, parents and carers. The partnership uses a wide range of methods to listen to the views of children and young people and to use them to shape service provision and evaluate quality. However, it recognises the need for greater consistency of practice in this area, particularly to ensure the effective involvement of younger children and a sufficiently diverse range of more vulnerable children and young people. It has recently taken steps to consolidate and develop work in this area through the development of a participation strategy and plan and the appointment of a participation worker, but it is too early to see the impact of these actions.

54. The council and its partners have shown innovative and creative leadership through ambitious plans for the rebuilding of Stanley Park High School at the Orchard Hill site and their involvement in a number of national and local pilots. The partnership was a Pathfinder Children's Trust in 2003 for disabled children, which enabled it to make an early start in helping to raise the life chances of disabled children and young people by bringing them and their parents or carers together in a partnership with health, education and social

services. Sutton has been successful in bidding to become a Pathfinder for the short-breaks funding from the Government's Aiming High for Disabled Children programme. As a result, the partnership has received additional funding in 2008/09 to develop and commission a wider and better range of services to allow parents to take short breaks from their caring role.

55. The prioritisation of services for children and young people is good. The CYPP clearly specifies the main priorities for improving services for children and young people under the government's five Every Child Matters outcome areas, plus a sixth category in relation to the management of resources. Service plans and strategies, which are mostly of high quality, are explicitly linked to ambitions and priorities and demonstrate the contribution of most partners. However, some of these strategies have recently been developed or reviewed and as such are not embedded in practice.

56. Prioritisation of resources is good. The council's medium term financial strategy supports the priorities in the CYPP and provides a solid framework for the delivery of the plan. The council and its partners have made a realistic assessment and identification of the resources required to implement the CYPP. Resources are redirected to support priority areas and early intervention and prevention activities. For example, the partnership has significantly invested in providing additional places for children with autistic spectrum disorder within the borough. An effective preventative strategy has reduced the number of looked after children and the savings have been reinvested in further preventative services. Difficult decisions are taken by councillors and officers where necessary and focus is sustained. Complex large-scale projects, such as the rebuilding of a new secondary school on the site of a specialist further education college are managed effectively and are on track.

57. The new LAA appropriately reflects local priorities. Key to these priorities is closing the gap in educational attainment for the most vulnerable children and young people. Nevertheless, the pace of change to bring about improvements in some areas such as corporate parenting, integrated youth support and aspects of the 14-19 agenda has been slow.

58. Priorities in the CYPP give appropriate attention to equality and diversity issues. However, the extent to which equality and diversity informs service development, delivery and is actively promoted across the partnership is variable.

59. The capacity of the partnership to deliver services for children and young people is good. The quality of leadership to deliver ambitions for children and young people is generally good. The Director of Children's Services and senior managers are providing strong and visible leadership across the partnership. The lead councillor for children and young people is well engaged and strongly committed to improving services for children and young people. However, the council is currently reviewing the implementation of their corporate parenting role which it recognises as being insufficiently developed.

60. Capacity is enhanced through good partnership working. Relationships with schools are very positive, as demonstrated by the willingness of the School's Forum to agree to exceed the centrally controlled limit on the Dedicated Schools Grant to enable growth in centrally managed services primarily aimed at vulnerable children. Statutory partners are well engaged and integrated into the partnership. Children's Trust arrangements are at a mature stage of development and integrated working is good and increasingly embedded in practice.

61. The partnership has most of the people and skills it needs to deliver its priorities. A comprehensive integrated workforce strategy was agreed in 2007 which is underpinned by clear long-term goals and well-matched actions to achieve them. Partners are actively involved in the joint training group and staff across the partnership are increasingly receiving training beyond their service responsibilities to broaden their understanding of partnership ambitions. Staff retention and recruitment processes are improving and resulting in reduced vacancies and turnover of social work staff and youth workers, but there are still some unfilled posts in the Youth Offending Team.

62. Budgets are increasingly aligned, but not pooled and financial management is strong across the partnership and within the council. The partnership has developed a joint commissioning framework, which it has begun to implement. One example is the joint commissioning of Tweedale Primary School to manage the play care and children's centre. The voluntary and community sector is contracted to provide some services; however, the partnership is at an early stage in mapping what this sector can contribute to integrated youth support services.

63. The council and its partners have the financial capacity to deliver their priorities and deliver good value for money. There is a strong commitment among councillors, senior and service managers to improving services and delivering value for money. The council and its partners use benchmarking to compare overall costs, school budgets and funding and a range of individual services in order to compare costs against quality. The children and young people's services across the council offer good value, compared to other services. It has relatively low or similar costs to its nearest neighbours and generally performs higher than most of these neighbours.

64. There are open and largely effective performance monitoring arrangements across the partnership and within the council. The council's Tracker system is well integrated in the performance monitoring of the partnership. The Tracker system provides quarterly monitoring reports to the Sutton Children and Young People's Partnership about progress in relation to the priorities and the targets from the CYPP and the LAA. This system also integrates risk management processes, actions from the equalities scheme and is aligned with financial reporting. The sub-themes of the CYPP and the partnership's work are monitored through detailed reports about a range of initiatives and the impact on outcomes for children and young people. This

includes information on minority ethnic and vulnerable groups of children and young people. However, the involvement of children and young people in evaluating services is limited.

65. Performance management is good overall, although it is underdeveloped in some services such as the Sutton LSCB. The council's scrutiny functions are working effectively and contributing to driving potential improvements in outcomes for children and young people. The scrutiny committee receives the quarterly Tracker performance reports and raises any areas of concern or items of underperformance. For example, a review of the partnership's approach to the roll-out of children centres has led to an increased focus on outcome measures.

66. The comprehensive CYPP review has provided an effective basis for further improvements. It identifies remedies for weaknesses and actions to secure continuous improvement, including efficiency and effectiveness of services and all within realistic timeframes. The CYPP action plan identifies clear roles for each of the partners, under each specific action, with costs, timescales and outcomes. However, this good practice is not consistent across the partnership and some plans, such as, Broadening Capability: Youth Work in Sutton 2008-11 and Mental Health and Emotional Well Being (a strategic approach to delivering comprehensive CAMHS) 2008-10, lack milestones and clear outcome targets.

67. Capacity to improve further is good. The council and the partnership have a strong track record of managing change and improving outcomes for the majority of children and young people in Sutton, particularly in relation to educational attainment. Nevertheless, improvements have been more gradual in some areas related to the most vulnerable children. For example, reducing high referral and re-referral rates, placement stability for looked after children and increasing the proportion of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are included in local provision. The vision and priorities of the CYPP are supported by service plans and strategies which are mostly of high quality. Children and young people are increasingly being consulted on provision as part of strategic planning. Strong leadership is provided by service managers. Partnership work is strong and well established. Children's Trust arrangements are mature and the partnership has the financial capacity to deliver its priorities. An agreed joint workforce development strategy is in place, but until recently staff turnover and the timeliness of appointments in some service areas have adversely affected the quality of some provision and outcomes, for example, those looked after children and young people. Value for money is good and the partnership is retaining its focus on quality and efficiency. Performance management arrangements are securely in place and they provide a good basis for driving further improvement, but they require further development in a few areas.

Annex A

MOST RECENTLY PUBLISHED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LONDON BOROUGH OF SUTTON

Summary

The London Borough of Sutton consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users. The council has responded well to the key areas identified for improvement at the last annual performance assessment (APA) and has continued to make good progress in improving most outcomes for children and young people. Its contribution to outcomes in enjoying and achieving are outstanding because of successful support for schools and the targeting of underperforming groups of pupils. This has resulted in standards of attainment that have improved from an already high level and the closing of attainment gaps among vulnerable groups, such as minority ethnic pupils.

In the other outcome areas, being healthy, staying safe, making a positive contribution and economic well-being, the council's contribution remains good. However, there remain areas for improvement across these outcomes, particularly in relation to the most vulnerable children and young people. For example, the need to improve long-term placement stability and adoptions of looked after children, the offending and re-offending rates and access to Child Adolescent Mental Health Services for non-specialist cases are all areas that could be improved.

The full annual performance assessment can be found at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=3069&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa_2007_319.pdf

Annex B

CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. The overall effectiveness of the council's children's services is good. Arrangements for safeguarding children and young people are good. Partner agencies collaborate well to safeguard children and young people through a wide range of good multi-agency early intervention and protective services. Services to and outcomes for looked after children and young people are adequate. Numbers of children who are looked after are low and steadily reducing, but short-term placements are insufficiently stable and the role of the corporate parent within the authority is insufficiently developed. Services to children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good and have effectively built on the partnership's experience as a Pathfinder Trust for disabled children. The percentage of children and young people with statements of special educational need is above average and a significant number attend independent and non-maintained schools outside the borough.

2. Service management is good. Ambitions are based on a thorough needs analysis. Children and young people are increasingly consulted, but the consistent engagement of more vulnerable groups in service planning and evaluation requires further consolidation. Priorities are good, owned by the partnership and supported by the redirection of resources to areas of need. But the pace of change in some areas has been slow. Capacity is good and enhanced by good partnership working and strong financial management. Performance management is good overall, although underdeveloped in some services. The partnership has good capacity for further improvement. While it has a good track record of improving outcomes overall, improvements for some vulnerable groups of children and young people have been more gradual. The CYPP is ambitious and priorities are clear and appropriate, but some strategies are new and have yet to impact. Value for money is good. Service managers provide strong leadership. Most services have sufficient staff to deliver plans and improvements.

3. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well in schools, the Youth Offending Service and a range of public health initiatives. A very high proportion of schools have achieved Healthy Schools status. Health outcomes for all expectant mothers and their babies are good. Emergency and primary care for children are good, but the ratio of staff to children on the children's ward at the acute trust is well below the national average. Good progress is being made in reducing under-18 conceptions. However, the downward trend has recently plateaued and the teenage pregnancy strategy is not consistently embedded into other relevant strategies. Good actions are taken to ensure looked after children and young people are healthy and the needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met. The CAMHS provide a comprehensive, integrated service. Access for specialist cases

is good, but can be problematic for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

4. Children and young people appear safe and arrangements to ensure this are good. Most children in the borough report feeling safe. Partner agencies collaborate well to safeguard children and young people. The range of family support is good and there is clear investment in early intervention and preventative services. The Sutton LSCB is well established and effectively provides strong strategic leadership. Good inter-agency policies, procedures and practice are underpinned by high quality training. However, the audit of practice across the partnership is not sufficiently systematic and robust and the range of information for the public on safeguarding issues is underdeveloped. Good interagency referral and assessment processes and communication are in place, but referral and re-referral rates remain high. The number of looked after children is low and reducing and most are placed with Sutton foster carers, who provide good quality care. While there are sufficient placements to meet needs in the borough, short-term placements are insufficiently stable. A legacy of high social worker vacancies and staff turnover has adversely affected relationships with some looked after young people.

5. The impact of local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and achieve well is outstanding. Early years setting are of good quality. Standards of attainment in all key stages continue to be above or well above average with a continuing trend of improvement. The attainment gap for many groups of minority ethnic pupils is narrowing, but this is not the case across all key stages for children and young people who are looked after. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are working at national curriculum levels make good progress. Special schools provide well for their pupils and the local authority is working with them to develop a cohesive and moderated system to track the progress of pupils who are working below national curriculum levels. Fixed-term exclusions from special schools are very high. The attendance of looked after children has improved over the last three years and is better than in similar authorities.

6. Children and young people are increasingly being consulted, but their consistent engagement in service planning and evaluation requires further consolidation. Children and young people contribute to the development and review of the CYPP and they have shaped some aspects of youth provision. However, the council recognise that the current depth and range of engagement is limited and does not effectively involve younger children and a sufficiently diverse range of vulnerable children and young people. There are insufficient opportunities for councillors to meet and engage with a wide range of looked after children and young people and so they are unable to effectively champion the needs of this group and to monitor outcomes. A new participation strategy is in place and a participation officer has been appointed from September 2008 to bring coherence to this area. Partnership work between the Youth Offending Team and other agencies is good and numbers of first time entrants to the criminal justice system are falling.

7. The contribution of local services to young people achieving economic well-being is good. Almost all 16 year olds continue in education at 16 and standards in GCE A-levels are high. A 14-19 strategy is being implemented, but progress in some areas, such as collaborative working between schools has been slow, although recently improved. The development of provision for more vulnerable groups has been challenging. The number of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are not in education, employment and training has steadily decreased, but targets to improve the proportion of young offenders, teenage mothers and care leavers engaged in education, employment or training are not being met.

Annex C

SUMMARY OF JOINT AREA REVIEW AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS

1. This joint area review was conducted using the arrangements required under Section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of inspectors from Ofsted, the Healthcare Commission and the Audit Commission. The review was undertaken according to the requirements of the *Framework for the Inspection of Children's Services*.
2. The review was linked to the contemporaneous corporate assessment of the local council by the Audit Commission and these findings plus aspects of the most recent Annual Performance Assessment are represented in the relevant part of the corporate assessment report.
3. This review describes the outcomes achieved by children and young people growing up in the London Borough of Sutton and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being. Together with the Annual Performance Assessment of Children's Services, joint area reviews focus on the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and are well prepared to secure economic well-being. This review explores these issues by focussing on children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, children who are looked after and children at risk or requiring safeguarding. 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).