



**Better
education
and care**

Joint area review

Peterborough City Council
Children's Services Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

Adult Learning Inspectorate
Audit Commission
Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)
Healthcare Commission
HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
HM Inspectorate of Court Administration
HM Inspectorate of Prisons
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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 (CHAI), 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 Peterborough area and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being. Joint area reviews focus on the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and are well prepared to secure economic well-being.
4. The review evaluates the collective contribution made to each outcome for children and young people by relevant services in the area. It also judges the contributions made by the council's services overall and, specifically, its education and children's social care services. Particular attention is given to joint action by local services on behalf of those groups of children and young people who are vulnerable to poor outcomes. Two such groups are covered in detail: children and young people who are looked after by the council; and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
5. The review took place in two stages consisting in total of three weeks over a six-week period. The first stage reviewed all existing evidence including:
 - self-assessment undertaken by local public service providers
 - a survey of children and young people
 - performance data
 - the findings of the earlier inspection of the youth service
 - planning documents
 - information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools, children's homes and day care provision
 - evidence gathered during the contemporaneous Youth Offending Team (YOT) inspection
 - briefings from staff within inspectorates, commissions and other public bodies in contact with local providers.
6. The second stage involved inspection fieldwork. This included studies of how far local services have improved outcomes for a small sample of children

and young people, some of whom have the most complex needs, and a study of provision in one neighbourhood in the Central ward of Peterborough. It also included gathering evidence on ten key judgements, selected because of their critical importance to improving outcomes for children and young people in the local area. Discussions were held with elected members of the local authority and their equivalents in other public agencies, officers from these agencies, service users, and community representatives. A review of case files for children and young people receiving support from a number of local agencies was also included.

Context

7. Peterborough is a long established city and was designated as a New Town in 1968. The city council achieved unitary status in 1998. Its population is growing rapidly and now comprises 158,000 people. Further growth is planned to continue at a higher rate than the national average and it is anticipated that, by 2020, it will have a population above 200,000. The significant development of new businesses in Peterborough require a wider range and higher levels of skill than those traditionally used in its manufacturing industries. Unemployment continues to be lower than the national average.

8. There were 42,098 children and young people (aged 0-19) in 2002, including 10,066 aged under five years. Peterborough has a diverse population with 14.3% from black and ethnic communities. It is a designated dispersal area and home to a significant number of asylum seeking children and families. The population of children of compulsory school age is 24,364, of whom 16% speak English as an additional language.

9. In terms of deprivation, Peterborough is a city of extremes. One area, Dogsthorpe, is among the most deprived areas in England and a further seven areas are deemed to have high levels of deprivation. These areas are characteristically linked to higher incidences of crime and disorder, health inequalities and barriers to higher education and employment opportunities. In contrast, six areas are within 10% of the least deprived with the West area being within the top 5%. National indices of deprivation place Peterborough overall as 100 out of 354.

10. Services for children and young people are delivered by the Peterborough City Council children's services department, which was formed in 2002 and incorporates early years, children's social care services (known as specialist services), education, youth offending service, Children's Fund, Connexions and the youth service. A new Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) was established in April 2005, and is chaired by the Director of Children's Services. The council has corporate parenting responsibility for 362 looked after children and young people.

11. Pre-school learning and care provision is delivered by a range of voluntary, private and statutory agencies. There are 76 schools in Peterborough: 58 primary and junior schools, 14 secondary schools and four special schools. Twenty per cent of all schools are denominational. There is one Pupil Referral Unit that is divided into three separate key stage centres, each based in a different geographical location. Joint working between the Learning and Skills Council, children's services, Connexions and training providers and schools is coordinated by the Team Peterborough Partnership. It has links to the economic development and growth agenda for the city. Post-16 education and training are provided by Peterborough Regional College, Peterborough College of Adult Education, 12 school sixth forms and various work-based learning providers.

12. The Greater Peterborough Primary Care Partnership commissions and delivers primary health care services to the local population on behalf of North Peterborough and South Peterborough Primary Care Trusts. The Partnership is committed to developing integrated children's services together with the council and the voluntary sector. Additionally, acute services are provided through the Peterborough and Stamford NHS Hospitals Foundation Trust and children's mental health services through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust. The Partnership and the Trusts fall within the Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire Strategic Health Authority.

Summary report

Outcomes for children and young people

13. **Most outcomes for children and young people are adequate. The safety of vulnerable children is inadequate.** Delays in responding to child welfare concerns and in the provision of services, together with inconsistent quality of service, result in the safety of children and young people not being sufficiently secure.

14. Outcomes for some children and young people from vulnerable groups, including looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are inconsistent, particularly with regard to their health and economic well-being. Levels of teenage pregnancies and substance misuse are higher than the national average. Too many vulnerable young people, including those who offend, are not engaged in post-16 education, employment and training or have insufficient support and appropriate accommodation to live independently.

15. However, clear political commitment to improving educational attainment, effective strategic partnerships and a range of good multi-agency work has resulted in most outcomes being at least adequate for most children and young people. Most children are healthy, enjoy their education, achieve

well, develop well socially and emotionally and continue successfully into further education, employment and training.

The impact of local services

Being healthy

16. **The work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is adequate.** Health services for children and young people are managed effectively, include a wide range of innovative practice and are valued by most parents and carers. Partnership working across agencies is well established in most areas. Good programmes of parental education and support are provided in partnership with SureStart and children's centres. A good multi-agency service has been jointly commissioned to combat drug and alcohol misuse and to address the high number of hospital admissions due to substance misuse.

17. Medical services for children and young people are effectively integrated across community and acute sectors. Children and young people have good access to doctors and health visitors. Immunisation uptake is high across the city, and children's oral health is satisfactory. Services work well together to promote the health care of looked after children. Clinical needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are addressed effectively through a well co-ordinated approach and prompt referrals to specialist services.

18. However, the impact of local services is limited in some areas. Early intervention initiatives, particularly with hard-to reach groups, are yet to impact sufficiently on low rates of breastfeeding initiation. The resources of some community and acute services are too stretched. Whilst referrals to therapeutic services are prompt, waiting times for treatment, such as speech and language therapy, are too long. Provision for general admissions to hospital is variable, with limited areas designated specifically for children and young people. Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) are inadequate. There are significant gaps in provision and capacity, with long waiting times for treatment, unsatisfactory in-patient provision for young people and inconsistent partnership working across key services

19. Progress on the promotion of healthier life-styles is inconsistent. Multi-agency services are making limited impact on teenage conceptions, which remain higher than the national average and incidence of chlamydia is increasing amongst young people. Slow progress on delivering sexual health support and guidance, in secondary schools has been accelerated recently. However, good progress has been made on the Healthy Schools Status programme, with 73% of schools actively involved and targets for 2006 already met.

Staying safe

20. **The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is inadequate.** Long standing concerns about the council's intake and assessment service arose in 2005 following a similar failure in 2004. It is a serious concern that previous corrective action did not result in a sustained improvement. High thresholds for social work services, delays in referring and investigating child welfare concerns, and inconsistent quality of assessment and care management mean that safeguarding arrangements are inadequate overall. A significant proportion of case files sampled by inspectors were judged to be unsatisfactory. Some good practice exists but a high proportion of cases lacked thorough multi-agency assessments and effective analysis and care planning. Provision of services to support children and young people and their families is often delayed.

21. Processes for scrutiny, reporting and auditing the quality of front-line practice are under-developed. The corporate parenting function does not sufficiently monitor safeguarding arrangements. Vacancy levels in social work teams result in many social workers carrying caseloads that are too high to support good practice and prevent the allocation of all looked after children cases to qualified social workers. Initiatives to recruit and retain social workers are yet to make a significant impact.

22. Joint working across agencies is inconsistent. Plans for an integrated service for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are at an early stage. A lack of social work input impacts adversely on the effectiveness of interventions for individual young people by the youth offending service. However, multi-agency responses to high levels of domestic violence and community safety are increasingly effective and co-ordinated. Integrated systems to support the identification and tracking of progress of all children are yet to be developed within and across agencies. However, good protocols support the identification of the movements of children looked after and those in need of protection.

23. A shortage of local placements for looked after children and young people, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, results in a significant dependence on placements outside the city. There is no placement strategy and the stability of placements is inconsistent. However, fostering services offer good support to foster carers. Children and young people receive good quality care in their foster and residential homes.

24. Management arrangements have been strengthened recently by the appointment of a new Assistant Director and appropriate revisions to the management of the intake and assessment service. Inspectors judged that new referrals are now managed appropriately and responses to child protection concerns are now effective. Front-line practice is improving through strengthened processes of supervision and staff development and training. All child protection cases are allocated to a qualified social worker

and cases are reviewed in line with statutory time scales. A good and increasing range of earlier intervention and family support services is starting to impact positively on high numbers of looked after children.

25. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is in place and is beginning to address child protection issues and the wider safeguarding agenda. Its lines of accountability and strategic links are not yet clear. Child protection procedures are comprehensive and up to date and supported by good quality multi-agency training. Uptake of training is high across all agencies.

26. Although there is a wide range of information and activities to reduce risks and raise awareness of children and young people, they continue to be concerned about bullying and safety on the streets. The level of admissions to hospitals remains high.

Enjoying and achieving

27. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good.** A clear and shared determination to improve education outcomes, and good partnership working by the council, its partners and schools is raising the aspirations of children and young people, and is improving educational attainments and the quality of education provision in Peterborough. Attainment of most pupils is improving rapidly and approaching the national average at most levels. Educational attainment of some vulnerable groups is less consistent. The attainment of looked after children and young people is good at primary level, but below the national average at Key Stage 4. However, good support is provided to most vulnerable children and young people, including teenage mothers and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Particularly good work has been undertaken to support high numbers of children whose first language is not English to achieve well.

28. School attendance has been addressed vigorously and has improved from a previously low level to the national average. The work of the pupil referral service is good. Although not all the young people who are excluded from school receive full-time education, the number of permanent exclusions has reduced to a low level and the reintegration policy is working very well, especially at Key Stage 2.

29. Partnerships between schools and children's services have been rebuilt through good leadership and a clear commitment to improvement. Relationships with schools, which were previously unsatisfactory, are now good. The majority of schools provide often good or at least satisfactory education. The support programme is effectively targeted at schools most in need. Sound progress is being made in reorganising schools so that surplus places can be reduced and the growing school population in Peterborough can be assimilated.

30. Good support and advice is provided for parents and carers through increasing provision of children's centres. Support for early years and childcare is very good, resulting in most early years settings providing good quality services

31. Opportunities for recreation include a number of innovative projects to enhance their take-up and are well used by children and young people. A positive feature is the way such activities are planned to include young people with disabilities.

Making a positive contribution

32. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is adequate.** There are many innovative examples of consultation with children and young people to inform service design and planning. However, low numbers of school councils and some current examples of participation demonstrate an insufficiently high expectation of the contribution that children and young people can make. Participation of children and young people from vulnerable groups, including looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is not always effective. Corporate parenting is underdeveloped and does not fully promote the needs of looked after children.

33. Support for, and the involvement of, individual children and young people in the planning and delivery of individual services is inconsistent. Access to advocacy and complaints processes is not effectively promoted for looked after children and young people, and for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, support for children and young people at key transition points in their education and care is effective and timely. Good efforts are being made to support the integration of new arrivals in Peterborough, including asylum seekers and refugees.

34. Efforts to reduce the rate of offending by young people have had mixed success. Although the rate of offending by looked after children has decreased, re-offending rates for young people and numbers in custody or on remand remain high. However, the council and its partners have successfully reduced the incidence of anti-social behaviour by young people. Good partnership work is having a positive impact on behaviour in schools and in the community. Impressive and determined action, led by the council, is having a positive effect positively on reducing significant racial tensions between groups and neighbourhoods.

35. The council and its partners have a clear and considered vision for improving and extending participation in a meaningful way. Consultation processes are appropriate for children and young people and involve high numbers. Many young people make a positive contribution to their communities through school and youth programmes such as peer mentoring and Millennium Volunteers.

Achieving economic well-being

36. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is adequate.** The proportion of young people over 16 who are not in education employment or training (NEET) is too high and includes a high proportion of young people who offend. The range of options for young people with moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities is too narrowly confined to mainstream programmes with additional learning support.

37. Support and provision of appropriate accommodation options for families and young people living independently vary from good to unsatisfactory. Too many young people, including care leavers, live in poor or temporary accommodation. Arrangements to help looked after young people leave care safely are not sufficiently developed. However, services to support young people with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities to move to further education, training or employment are good.

38. The council's strategy for growth and regeneration has a strong emphasis on integration and development of services to raise aspirations and meet the education, employment and training needs of young people. The volume and range of childcare provision across the city is good.

39. The Team Peterborough Partnership effectively draws together key agencies and providers of education and training, and is making good progress towards a coherent 14-19 strategy for education and training. The quality of post-16 provision in schools is improving. Achievement at AS/A level is improving rapidly but remains below national averages. Young people have access to appropriate preparatory programmes for employment or work based learning. Recent success rates in Entry to Employment (E2E) and apprenticeship programmes have improved and are in line with national averages.

Service management

40. **The management of services for children and young people in Peterborough is adequate. The capacity for improvement is adequate.** Ambition for children and young people is adequate. Improvement of educational outcomes for children and young people is at the centre of Peterborough's vision and future growth agenda. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) sets out a wide and challenging agenda for improvement. Structures to support the effective delivery of the plan are in place. Strategic leadership of the CYPSP and collaboration between agencies have been enhanced through the chairmanship of the Director of Children's Services.

41. Prioritisation for children and young people is adequate overall. The council acknowledges that the priority afforded to safeguarding children and corporate parenting was inadequate and is addressing this at corporate and departmental levels. The knowledge and understanding of lead councillors for children's services about the wide range of issues facing vulnerable children and young people is limited and the prioritisation of corporate parenting is inadequate. However, political leadership for education is good. The effective deployment of additional resources to support education has led to significant improvements in attainment.

42. Leadership of children's services is adequate and improving. A new senior management team has been established following a long period of changes at chief officer level. The team has taken action to deal with some significant areas of weakness, including the quality of assessment and care management and the management of the youth offending service, but impact is not yet clear. Senior managers are setting a clear direction and a challenging culture for the department.

43. The capacity of children's services to deliver its objectives is mixed. Staff shortages are detracting from effective service delivery, particularly in specialist services. Whilst there are some examples of good commissioning of specific services, the process is not maximising service improvements and efficiencies. Overall value for money in children's services is adequate. Corporate and departmental systems, which underpin the delivery of priorities, are fit for purpose but many are new and have yet to be fully tested. Partnership working is adding to the capacity of children's services

44. Performance management is adequate and improving. Performance plans are not all supported by clear targets for improving outcomes and some lack clear measures for evaluating impact and effectiveness. The scrutiny function is subject to review and is ineffective with respect to the safeguarding of children. However, new performance management systems and improved data are leading to better monitoring and quality assurance.

Grades

Grades awarded:

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

	Local services overall	Council services	Health services
Being healthy	2		
Staying safe	1		
Enjoying and achieving	3		
Making a positive contribution	2		
Achieving economic well-being	2		
Service management	2		
Capacity to improve	2	2	
Children's services		2	
The education service		3	
The social care services for children		1	
The health service for children			2

Recommendations

For immediate action

- The council and its partners should agree and implement appropriate and clear thresholds to improve access to universal, targeted and specialist services.
- The council and its partners should ensure timely and appropriate responses to child welfare concerns and support effective

assessment and care planning for all children and young people in need.

- The council and its partners should strengthen auditing, monitoring, and scrutiny of referral, assessment and care management services to improve the quality of practice and identify emerging trends at an early stage.
- The council should ensure that all looked after children and young people have access to complaints and advocacy services.
- The council should ensure that all councillors and officers are aware of their corporate parenting responsibilities and represent those interests effectively.

For action over the next six months

- The Cambridge and Peterborough Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust and its partners should improve in-patient services to ensure appropriate mental health care for young people, and should reduce waiting times for treatment provided by child and adolescent mental health services.
- The council and its partners should improve support services for children and young people with moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities in order to increase choice, access and support to families.
- The council should ensure that all children and young people permanently excluded from school receive the minimum recommended education.
- The council and its partners should increase and sustain the engagement of vulnerable young people in education, employment and training.
- The council and its partners should increase opportunities for participation for all children and young people in planning and management of services.
- The council and its partners should implement joint commissioning arrangements to enhance service provision and value for money and, in particular, to reduce the numbers of agency placements.
- The council should strengthen recruitment and retention processes to reduce high numbers of vacancies of qualified social workers.

For action in the longer term

- The council and its partners should increase provision for young people to live independently and safely.
- The council and its partners should improve information about the needs and whereabouts of children and young people to support service planning, and to evaluate the effectiveness of joint initiatives and their impact on outcomes.

Main report

Outcomes for children and young people

45. **Most outcomes for children and young people are adequate but the safety of some vulnerable children is inadequate**

46. **Children and young people in Peterborough are generally healthy.** Whilst most children and young people consider that they are healthy, some outcomes are less favourable. Teenage pregnancies and the rate of young people admitted to hospital due to substance misuse are higher than the national levels. Community and acute services are too stretched in some key areas. Waiting times are too long for mental health treatment and for speech and language therapy. A lack of designated in-patient provision for young people results in those with a mental health crisis being placed, inappropriately, on adult psychiatric or paediatric acute wards.

47. Most children and young people have access to good information and support. Access to primary care services is good, with high uptake of immunisation and satisfactory oral health. However, health outcomes are compromised by low breastfeeding rates. Health care for looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.

48. **The safety of children and young people in Peterborough is inadequate.** Delays in referring and investigating child welfare concerns, and the inconsistent quality of assessment and care management, mean that the safety of children is not secure. Children and young people have inconsistent access to social workers. The proportion of looked after children allocated to a qualified social worker is too low and too few children in need receive social work support. However, recent action to improve safeguarding arrangements has been effective and new referrals of child welfare concerns are now responded to effectively. All children on the child protection register are allocated to a qualified social worker.

49. An increasing range of earlier intervention services is increasing support for vulnerable children and has begun to have a positive impact on high numbers of looked after children. Children and young people have access to a good range of age-appropriate information and guidance on how to keep safe. However, some young people do not feel safe outside their schools or home areas and express concerns about bullying and road safety. Admissions of children to hospital due to accidents are higher than the national average. Most looked after children receive good care and support from foster carers and residential care staff. However, choice of placement is limited and a significant proportion of looked after children are accommodated outside the city. Children and young people with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support and respite services. However, these are insufficient to meet the demand of those with moderate levels of learning difficulty and/or disability.

50. **Children and young people achieve well.** Most children and young people attend school regularly and enjoy their education. Young children benefit from good pre-school education, with most being well prepared for school. Education standards are improving rapidly, particularly at Key Stages 2 and 4. The average point score for A-level students, although below the national average, has increased at a greater rate than nationally. Outcomes for vulnerable groups are mixed: attainment of young people who offend is declining, and although looked after children and young people achieve well in primary education, attainment is below national averages at Key Stage 4. Achievements of most pupils with special educational needs are satisfactory. School attendance has improved and is now consistent with the national average. Although the number of permanent exclusions is low, some pupils excluded from school do not receive the recommended hours of education. Most children and young people have access to satisfactory recreational facilities.

51. **Children and young people have a satisfactory range of opportunities to make decisions and take personal responsibility and many make a positive contribution to their communities.** Most children and young people enjoy living in their local areas. They are well supported to develop socially and emotionally, and are encouraged to help each other through an effective peer-mentoring scheme. They are supported well when starting school and when transferring from one school to another. The transition from school to college or work is less effective, with higher than average numbers of young people not engaging in further education, employment or training. The range of good opportunities for children and young people to contribute to decisions that affect their daily lives is increasing from a low level, particularly in schools. Young people speak very positively about community cohesion initiatives. However, they do not feel sufficiently safe outside their immediate neighbourhoods. A good range of activities is in place to prevent crime in the most deprived areas. Most looked after children and young people attend their reviews, but are not always fully engaged in the process. Access to representation is limited, and some looked

after children and young people and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not aware of advocacy and complaints services.

52. Children and young people are increasingly able to achieve economic well-being and most are prepared well for working life.

Most young people have access to an increasingly varied curriculum from the age of 14 through good partnership between schools, the college and work-based learning providers. Rates of participation in the E2E programme are just above national averages. Attainment at AS/A level is improving rapidly but is below the national average. The proportion of young people who progress to higher education is growing but remains low. The number of young people over 16 who are NEET is reducing slowly but is too high; in particular, the proportion of young offenders aged 16 or above in this group is very high.

53. The proportion of care leavers in education, training or employment is declining. Young people have insufficient access to appropriate accommodation and support for independent living. Vulnerable young people, including care leavers, continue to be housed, inappropriately, in temporary accommodation, such as bed and breakfasts and hostels. Education and training opportunities for young people with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good, but are too limited for those with moderate difficulties and/or disabilities.

The impact of local services

Being healthy

54. The work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is adequate. Early intervention initiatives in health services and Sure Start, including specialist midwives for teenage parents, are improving breastfeeding initiation rates. However, these remain below the national average. Capacity issues, due to increasing demand for services and continuing vacancy factors, are having an adverse impact on the sustainability of this improvement. In particular, capacity in the hospital maternity unit is hindering progress towards the Baby Friendly accredited status award.

55. Good childcare education programmes are accessible in a wide range of local settings to parents of children under five years. Innovative practice includes Saturday and evening parenting classes and weight management sessions. However, access is inconsistent across the city. Good written information is provided in English, but is not consistently available in other languages relevant to the local communities.

56. There is a wide range of provision for health promotion that is increasingly co-ordinated and delivered in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies. One example, the Gladstone Women's Sports Association, has increased access and take-up of sport by Asian women and girls. A high

level, 73%, of schools are engaged with the Healthy School Status programme. Targets for 2006 have already been met, with 60% of schools having met national requirements. Pupils in primary and secondary schools are encouraged to eat healthily and are educated about healthy lifestyles. Some services are in place to reduce obesity in children and young people. However, plans for a consistent city-wide service lack consistent data and are yet to be fully implemented.

57. A Health and Young People's Advice Centre (HYPA) delivers good health advice and guidance for young people. Drug and alcohol services are jointly commissioned to address the high incidence of substance misuse. Good practice includes Bridgegate and Drinksense, voluntary agencies providing information and guidance to combat alcohol and drug misuse. However, personal and sexual health education is less well co-ordinated. Teenage conceptions are higher than national and comparator averages and positive outcomes to multi-agency interventions are limited. Good interagency plans for improving sexual health promotion for young people have recently been launched across the city. A community-based screening and treatment service is being developed to address increasing rates of chlamydia diagnosis among 16-24 year olds.

58. Primary care provision is good, with families having good access to health visitors and doctors. Immunisation uptake is high. Referrals to specialist therapy services are prompt for most children including those with complex needs. However, whilst initial assessment times for speech and language therapy are satisfactory, waiting times for treatment are too long.

59. Acute in-patient provision for children is satisfactory and includes a good day assessment unit. Provision for children and young people in the Accident and Emergency Department is less satisfactory, with no separate designated facilities. There are good plans to improve all facilities through the future building of a new hospital. An integrated model of care across acute and community paediatric services promotes continuity of service, particularly for children with complex medical needs. However, in-patient stays for children are sometimes extended inappropriately due to delays in responses from specialist services.

60. CAMHS are inadequate overall. The service is not fully integrated, lacks a comprehensive needs assessment and has significant gaps in its provision and capacity. Whilst most new referrals are assessed within eight weeks, children and young people experience long waiting times for treatment. Insufficient social work input limits access to necessary support for these vulnerable children and young people and their families. Access to CAMHS for looked after children is variable. Although a process for fast track access is in place, children and young people and their carers often experience long waits for service. In-patient provision for young people in crisis is inadequate and a policy to manage placements safely in adult psychiatric provision is not effectively established. Plans to develop a 24 hour emergency service are

progressing in line with the national target. There is a wide range of good joint working arrangements, including those with the Pupil Referral Unit and the Substance Misuse Team. Some good practice includes early intervention activities to promote parent/infant mental health, provided by Sure Start and Peterborough Parent-Infant Project. The innovative Sakoon Project provides good support to parents and children from black and ethnic communities. There are good services for children with challenging behaviours, such as autistic spectrum disorders, but these are not always effectively promoted to parents.

61. Health care for most looked after children is good, with high levels of immunisations, health screening and dental checks. A good multi-agency forum monitors and promotes a focus on health and includes the successful Phat to be Fit event. Health assessments are child-centred and focus strongly on health improvement. Foster carers and residential care staff value highly the health training, support and advice provided to them.

62. Clinical provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The Child Development Unit provides a good integrated service for children under five years. Good medical support is provided to special schools. However, parents whose children attend schools outside the city experience difficulties in accessing health services. Transition from paediatric to adult health care is managed sensitively and is appropriately flexible.

Staying safe

63. **The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is inadequate.** Long standing concerns about the council's intake and assessment service arose, in 2005, following a similar failure in 2004. It is a serious concern that previous corrective action did not result in a sustained improvement. The council has recently taken robust action to strengthen its management arrangements. It is too early to be confident that this time the improvements will be sustained. However, inspectors judged that this key service is now being adequately managed and responses to new referrals and child protection concerns are now sufficiently robust.

64. Safeguarding arrangements are inadequate. Thresholds for social work services are high and contribute to unmet needs. A high threshold for service, set in 2004 as an interim crisis intervention measure, remains in place. Although it supports timely responses to child protection concerns and immediate risk of family breakdown, it excludes a significant proportion of vulnerable children from accessing social work support. Rates of referrals and assessments of needs are lower than in comparable councils. Referring agencies have adapted their practice to this threshold, thus increasing further the delays in assessment and intervention. Initial responses to some referrals are delayed and subsequent action is often slow. Pre-birth conferences to

safeguard unborn babies are sometimes convened at a late stage. Poor communication with hospital staff leads to some children remaining too long in hospital. Assessments vary in quality from good to poor and compliance with time-scales for completion is below national averages. Joint working between agencies is inconsistent. Whilst some good practice exists, the rigour of care plans is often diluted by a lack of multi-agency assessments. Inspectors judged a significantly high proportion of case files, from the sample provided for case-tracking during the inspection, to be unsatisfactory. Plans are in place to improve the quality of multi-agency assessments. A pilot of the Common Assessment Framework and plans for its roll-out across the city are progressing well.

65. Numbers of children on the child protection register (CPR) are higher than comparator averages. All children on the CPR are allocated to a qualified social worker. Although child protection reviews are timely, some core groups do not meet regularly and delay implementation of child protection plans. Inconsistency in the quality of decision-making is evident in some case files and is reflected through high de-registration and re-registration rates of children on the CPR.

66. Social worker vacancies mean that caseloads in some specialist service teams are too high to support good practice and timely assessment and intervention. Allocation of cases is mostly limited to child protection and looked after children. Allocations of looked after children to qualified social workers are significantly lower than the national average, although all have access to a named worker. All children on the child protection register are allocated to qualified social workers.

67. The management of specialist services has been strengthened recently by the appointment of a new Assistant Director. Processes for monitoring front line performance and for developing staff competence have been strengthened. Initiatives to reduce recruitment and retention pressures have been introduced but are yet to make an impact. Risks have been fully assessed and new business plans provide a sound basis for improvement. Management overview of practice is improving and staff supervision processes are now consistent and well implemented. The council has acknowledged that, although councillors undertake statutory visits to children's homes, its reporting and scrutiny of safeguarding arrangements, and in particular the assessment and care management service, is insufficient. Plans are being developed to strengthen the corporate parenting function.

68. Improved partnerships have the potential to strengthen safeguarding arrangements. The LSCB was established in October 2005 but its accountability and strategic links with the CYPSP are yet to be clarified. Comprehensive and multi-agency safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and include a sound procedure for the management of serious case reviews. However, processes for ensuring that lessons are learnt, across all

agencies, are less clear. The LSCB provides good quality training, with high take-up and satisfaction levels.

69. Services to promote safer environments for children and young people are adequate. Good information and schemes to increase road safety have raised awareness of children, young people and their carers. Numbers killed or seriously injured on roads are reducing. Most childcare settings effectively safeguard children. Appropriate processes are in place for vetting staff, contractors and volunteers. However, Criminal Records Bureau checks of school governors are not routinely carried out. Inter-agency responses to high levels of domestic violence are effectively co-ordinated by a good domestic violence strategy and a multi-agency risk assessment conference framework. Police contribute to good school-based initiatives to address fear of crime and to community initiatives to increase cohesion and safety. However, young people remain concerned about their safety outside their home area, particularly with regard to bullying and safety on roads.

70. A multi-agency protocol supports the identification of movement of children in need of protection and looked after children. Information sharing about vulnerable children and young people is improving, although systems are not fully linked across and within services. A comprehensive education database tracks the progress of vulnerable groups including looked after children and those at risk of exclusion. Procedures for formal notification of children missing from education are being developed.

71. A well thought-out family support strategy is being implemented. Increasing provision of earlier intervention and preventative services are reaching more vulnerable children. This, together with an effective gate-keeping process, is beginning to impact positively on the rate of admissions. However, the overall number of looked after children remains high. There is no comprehensive placement strategy. Long-term placement stability is inconsistent and arrangements for permanency are often delayed. Local placements are insufficient for the volume or diversity of need and result in a high dependence on agency placements. Most children have good quality and safe placements. A good scheme provides training and effective 24-hour advice and support to foster carers.

72. Children and young people with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good family support and respite care. High thresholds restrict access to these services for children with moderate levels of learning difficulties and/or disability. An ambitious plan is in place to increase provision and integrate services. Transition arrangements to adult services are timely and well managed. However, some young people experience delays due to a lack of available and suitable adult accommodation.

Enjoying and achieving

73. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good.** The support, advice and guidance provided for parents and carers to enable pupils to enjoy school and achieve well is good. Sure Start and children's centres deliver good play activities, particularly in disadvantaged areas. Information about services is widely available, but not enough is available in languages relevant to local communities.

74. The Early Years Team is well managed and delivers very good support to providers. Most provision is good and there is easy access to a wide range of provision for children under three years, although some parents find it to be expensive. Numbers of providers and places are expanding at a faster rate than nationally and targets for 2006 have already been met. Although the proportion of providers issued with actions is higher than that found nationally, the Early Years Team has correctly identified the issues and has a history of working successfully with providers to rectify them. Positive initiatives, such as the nationally recognised early years reading development work and the home-school liaison work for looked after children, are increasingly preparing children for school well.

75. The council's work to ensure good education provision is effective. The strategy for reducing the high level of surplus places and planning for future growth is sound. Development in tackling secondary school reorganisation has been slowed, however, by a need to revisit the initial consultation of 2003 in order to ensure that all schools are appropriately involved. Guidance for parents on admission arrangements is adequate. However, agreeing admissions criteria as part of the secondary reorganisation remains a challenge. Most schools provide good education. The one school causing concern is proposed for closure. Children, parents and staff affected are being supported well. An effective intensive support programme provided by the school improvement team is appropriately targeted on schools most in need.

76. Relationships between children's services and schools have improved significantly since the arrival of the current Director of Children's Services and his senior managers. The improved collaboration between schools has increased capacity to raise standards in education. Against a context of a continually changing and a richly diverse community, projects such as Read, Write and Inspire are motivating all those involved and are improving children's literacy. Rapid improvement has brought pupils' attainment close to national averages. Rates of improvement are among the best in the country in Key Stages 2 and 4 and at Advanced Level, where most efforts have been concentrated. Work at Key Stage 3 has shown modest improvement. The council has yet to tackle the declining standards in Key Stage 1. Recent positive initiatives to remedy this are well researched and appropriately targeted.

77. Teenage mothers receive very good support to help them continue with their education in mainstream schools as far as possible. Good work is being done to improve attainments of Pakistani boys and of traveller children at Key Stage 4. The authority is increasingly providing good support for the children of immigrant and refugee families. Bi-lingual assistants are helping children for whom English is a second language to make better than expected progress. Support for gifted and talented pupils is good in the Excellence in Cities cluster and is now being developed in all schools.

78. Attendance of pupils has increased to the national average due to robust action by the pupil referral and education welfare services. Support for behaviour is good. The council has identified lead professionals in all schools who actively monitor behaviour. A programme for social and emotional aspects of learning is effective in some primary schools. Provision in the Pupil Referral Units is good. Low numbers of exclusions enable the units to tackle challenging behaviours successfully. Reintegration of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 2, is effectively supported by successful schemes such as dual registration. However, the required hours of education provision is not met for some excluded pupils.

79. Opportunities for children and young people to access leisure activities and play are adequate. Good use is made of the specialist sports college. Sporting activities include young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and ethnic groups of both genders. Children and young people enjoy their play and youth centres. However, some parents are concerned about provision for young children. Parks in some areas are poorly resourced with damaged equipment not always being replaced.

80. Looked after children and young people and their carers receive adequate support from a dedicated multi-agency team to encourage attendance at school. However, academic attainment is too low. Results for primary-aged children are adequate but results at GCSE remain well below national average. Although measures have been taken to challenge underachievement, insufficient use is made of target setting to help raise standards. Support for higher attaining looked after children and those gaining entry to university is, however, good.

81. Support for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate. Those with severe disabilities in special schools enjoy their education and achieve well. Achievements of the majority of pupils with special educational needs are adequate. However, there is insufficient personal support in mainstream schools to enable all these young people to access the full curriculum. A lack of suitable school places results in a significant proportion of disabled children being educated outside the authority.

Making a positive contribution

82. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is adequate.** Most children and young people have appropriate opportunities to learn social skills, develop responsibility and care for their environment. Peer mentoring is developing in some schools with good outcomes, both for mentors and those who are mentored. Good support is provided in schools for pupils with social and behavioural problems, including successful and innovative links with the Eco Sustainability Centre and New Ark. Children experiencing difficulties are identified at an early age and receive good co-ordinated support from agencies. Support for young people is less well co-ordinated, despite some good partnership working in the youth service.

83. Children and young people are supported well at most key transition points. Agencies work well together to help children and young people start and change schools. Evidence of good practice includes strong links between the primary school, children's centre and pre-school settings in the Gladstone area. Good efforts are being made to support the integration of new arrivals in Peterborough, including refugees and asylum seekers. Less effective support is offered to young people when they move on to further education, employment and training. Limited evidence of improved outcomes for young carers and travellers is acknowledged in the CYPP and work has commenced to audit the full extent of need.

84. Participation of children and young people in the planning and management of services is adequate overall. A multi-agency participation strategy is improving the consistency and frequency of participation. Children and young people are increasingly consulted and listened to when key local decisions are made. Recent very good developments include the Youth Forum, the Young People's Office, 'political speed dating' (where young people can take part in a short and focused dialogue with politicians) and Roving Reporters. However, use of these initiatives is not yet fully developed. The council consulted extensively on the CYPP. Consultation successfully reached more than 1000 children and young people but did not reach many looked after children or those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many young people take part in volunteering activities, although the range of options and availability of accredited schemes are limited. Participation in schools is under developed: just under a half do not have a school council.

85. Work to reduce anti-social behaviour is adequate, and includes a wide range of activities. Although there are good initiatives, such as the city-wide anti-bullying week, there is no agreed multi-agency strategy to combat bullying. Behaviour within schools is generally good and there is good work being undertaken, with an increasing use of restorative justice to encourage early resolution of anti-social behaviour. Effective use of voluntary contracts in communities has successfully reduced the rate of anti-social behaviour orders. Impressive and determined action, led by the council, is addressing

significant racial tensions between groups and neighbourhoods. This includes many strands of the innovative and inspiring Unity programme. Opportunity to reinforce progress made is, however, limited due to insufficient feedback to young people on action on shared pledges.

86. Services vary in their effectiveness to prevent offending by young people. There is a broad range of crime prevention initiatives in schools and in the community. Many individual examples of joint working between agencies are contributing to a reduction in youth crime. However, they are not effectively co-ordinated. The youth offending service is not using its full potential to work effectively with partners to reduce youth crime and anti-social behaviour. Its links with key services such as the youth service and specialist services are weak and impact on the effectiveness of programmes for children and young people and their families. Areas for intervention by the Youth Inclusion Project are targeted appropriately and there is a good range of structured activities run by the Positive Activities for Young People project. However, processes for evaluation of these activities and their fit with the objectives of the CYPP are not clear. The use of remand and custody and rates of re-offending remain at a high level.

87. Arrangements to help looked after children to make a positive contribution are adequate. Most looked after children attend their own reviews but do not always feel fully involved in the process. The council places a strong emphasis on maintaining appropriate contact between looked after children and their families. Looked after children and young people who offend receive appropriate guidance and support and rates of offending are reducing. Transition arrangements are managed effectively for most looked after children. Foster carers provide good support to young people who are leaving care. However, some have no real sense of empowerment in terms of their future choices. Not all children and young people are aware of the advocacy or complaints service. They and their carers are insufficiently consulted about the planning and design of services. Roles and responsibilities for corporate parenting are neither understood nor executed well and provide few opportunities for the voice of looked after children to be heard on an individual or collective basis.

88. Effective processes are increasing for consulting children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Young people are well supported by Connexions in developing an informative website and contributing to staff selection processes. They contribute to decisions made in reviews about their education, treatment and care. However, some parents identify the lack of advocacy and ineffective complaints procedure as barriers to accessing appropriate services for their children.

Achieving economic well-being

89. **The work of all services to help children and young people to achieve economic well-being is adequate.** The range and volume of

childcare provision across the city is good. It is appropriately signposted to parents and carers through a broad range of information including a comprehensive Children's Strategic Partnership Directory. Arrangements for support for young parents in learning are effective.

90. Increasing vocational options for 14-16 year olds are mainly provided by the Peterborough regional college and are aligned appropriately towards local major employers. The council has seconded a manager from the college, to good effect, to lead on these developments. Work experience for learners in Year 10 is routinely in place. Advice and guidance for 13-19 year olds is provided effectively by the Connexions service, which works closely with the youth service to provide information in a range of settings such as youth centres. The youth service offers a satisfactory range of activities to develop young peoples' personal and social skills.

91. The proportion of young people over 16 who are not in education, employment or training is too high: despite a small recent reduction, it remains significantly above the national average. Just under half of young offenders are not in education, employment or training, one of the highest proportions nationally, and the number of care leavers is increasing. Some small-scale initiatives, such as a summer school for learners at risk of disengagement, have produced positive outcomes. However, links between Connexions and the youth offending service are weak. Overall, action to reduce the number of those not in education, employment or training in the city lacks vision and a clear focus on improving outcomes for young people.

92. The strategic vision for development of 14-19 provision is good. Council leadership of the Team Peterborough Partnership is strong, drawing together effectively most providers of education and key agencies. Whilst the initial response to the findings of an area wide inspection of 14-19 provision three years ago was slow, the rate of recent progress has increased considerably. Standards are improving rapidly, but retention and attainment at AS/A level are below national averages. Quality assurance of learning and teaching has improved.

93. Provision for post-16 learning is developing appropriately. Young people who need additional support can access useful preparatory programmes for employment or work-based learning. A reasonable spread of apprenticeship is offered. The quality of all work-based learning is satisfactory or better. Recent success rates in participation in the E2E and apprenticeship programmes are at or above national averages. The Local Skills Council and Jobcentre Plus support improvements by limiting contracts to providers judged, by inspections, to be at least satisfactory.

94. Support for learners from black and ethnic communities is inconsistent. It includes a successful project to engage young Asian women and intensive English language provision in schools for young European immigrants in Years 10 and 11. However English language provision for post-16 learners is

oversubscribed and is insufficient in work-based or vocational learning settings.

95. The council's strategy for managing the growth of Peterborough is at the core of its approach to community regeneration. It has a strong focus on raising educational attainment and the employment skills of young people. The council has a clear vision of the role a university will play in raising young people's aspirations and participation in higher education and is working with partners to achieve this. Well-conceived community regeneration initiatives include ensuring appropriate facilities replace those lost in the wake of school reorganisation.

96. The council has an ambitious long-term strategy to increase affordable new housing in the city. Currently, a shortage of vacant two- and three-bedroom properties contributes to significant numbers of families living in one-bedroom units. Necessary adaptations to the homes of families with a disabled child take too long; completion of such projects often exceeds two years. Appropriate housing for young people living independently is insufficient. Although some live in appropriate supervised housing, demand significantly exceeds supply. Too many young people, including care leavers, live in unsuitable multi-occupation households, hostels and other temporary accommodation. Housing providers' plans to increase supported accommodation are impeded by insufficient information on young people's housing needs.

97. Arrangements to help children and young people to leave care are not sufficiently developed and pathway planning is unsatisfactory since a third of care leavers currently have no current plan. Joint working between the leaving care service and other agencies is inconsistent. Staffing pressures result in some care leavers not having access to personal advisors. However, this shortfall is offset, to some extent, by the good support that is provided to care leavers by their foster carers. Difficulties in accessing the leaving care service are exacerbated by poor transport links to the service office located outside the city centre.

98. Transition arrangements for helping young people with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities to move into further education, employment or training are good, but those for young people with moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities are more variable. A toolkit for managing transitions, recently developed in partnership with schools, is starting to have a positive impact. An innovative project developed by the Local Skills Council enables a small number of young people with the most profound and complex disabilities to continue their education locally. However, the range of education and training provision for most young people is too narrow. Choice of programmes, attendance hours and individual support is often too limited.

Service management

98. **The management of services for children and young people is adequate overall.** Ambitions for children and young people are adequate. Peterborough's broad and challenging vision is set out in a comprehensive CYPP approved by the council in April 2006. The plan, based on extensive consultation, identifies appropriate priorities for improving outcomes for children and young people but does not clearly specify the challenging ambitions that managers describe for their services, particularly for specialist services. There is a clear and widespread understanding of the ambitions for education amongst all councillors, offices and partners, but this is less apparent in relation to the health and safety of children and young people.

99. Structures to support the effective delivery of the CYPP are in place. Strategic leadership of the CYPSP and collaboration between agencies have been enhanced through the chairmanship of the Director of Children's Services and are now strong. The partnership includes appropriate representation from public and voluntary agencies.

100. Political leadership is adequate for improving educational attainment but is insufficient for corporate parenting. Although the educational attainment of looked after children is scrutinised, there is no effective corporate parenting policy and outcomes for looked after children are insufficiently reported or promoted. The council acknowledges that the engagement of councillors with the children and young people's agenda is too limited and has put plans in place to raise the knowledge and understanding of councillors leading on children and young people's issues.

101. Leadership of children's services is adequate overall and improving. It has undergone substantial turbulence since its inception in 2002. The establishment of a new senior management team in 2005 has brought stability, improved outcomes in education and increased provision for vulnerable children. However, this contrasts sharply with some significant weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements and in the management of the youth offending service. Senior management of specialist services has been strengthened through the recent appointment of a new assistant director, and is improving. Senior management structures, roles and responsibilities are clear. Stronger leadership is now setting a clear direction for children's services, and is facilitating joint working and a more ambitious culture. Effective action has strengthened management processes which, whilst fit for purpose, were not previously making sufficient impact. Business planning is developing but resource management is not yet effectively linked into the process. Whilst budgetary control is adequate, there is insufficient evidence that the costs of delivering the CYPP have been calculated. The risks associated with the delivery of business plans have now been assessed.

102. Prioritisation in children's services is adequate overall. The council identified that its most pressing priority was to improve education outcomes and has concentrated most of its effort to achieve this. It acknowledges that insufficient priority was afforded to maintaining robust safeguards for children and is now taking appropriate action to remedy this at departmental and corporate levels. Priorities for improving outcomes for children and young people are integral to Peterborough's growth strategy and are clearly reflected in corporate and community strategies and local Public Service Agreements. Leadership on these corporate strategies is good. Strong and effective action is being taken to enhance equality and diversity, for example through the Unity project and the New Link programme for refugees and asylum seekers.

103. Capacity to deliver better outcomes for children and young people is adequate overall. Partnership working with the Primary Care Partnership and the voluntary sector is increasing capacity. Integration of services is improving and is supported by good quality training. However, a shortage of social workers results in some fragile arrangements, particularly in specialist services. Action has been taken to address this through additional appointments and good initiatives to develop staff competence and development. However, insufficient capacity in partner organisations, such as those providing child and adolescent mental health services, is yet to be addressed.

104. The council funds children's services at a high level compared to its statistical neighbours and most other unitary councils. However, success in improving outcomes against the priorities is mixed. Local performance indicators for children's social care show no recent overall improvement. In contrast, educational attainment is improving rapidly. Value for money in children's services is adequate. The council has sound plans for the School's Forum to explore how high levels of budget reserves, in some schools, can be used to bring broader benefits for children and young people. There are some examples of efficiency savings, notably in the development of children's centres. Whilst there are examples of good commissioning and procurement of specific services, these functions are not sufficiently developed to support improvements and increase value for money. An outline joint commissioning framework has been agreed and is being piloted for young people's substance misuse services.

105. Performance management of children's services is adequate overall. The council and its partners acknowledge that the quality of data is variable and are developing robust data to underpin the delivery and evaluation of the CYPP. New performance systems are leading to improved reporting and quality of information. Quarterly reporting of performance is established and enhanced by a clear and accessible presentation of performance data against targets. This model has recently been adopted by the CYPSP to monitor performance against shared priorities and objectives. However, whilst business plans reflect a commitment to service improvement, they are not all

outcome based and some lack clear and measurable targets and milestones and measures for impact and effectiveness. The scrutiny function, particularly in relation to the role of Policy Overview Committees, is subject to review. The scrutiny of the safeguarding function for children and young people is ineffective.

106. The council's self-assessment did not fully reflect all the issues which affect its ability to deliver services. It provided clear information about the scale and diversity of need, commitment and prioritised approach to improving outcomes for children. However, it did not acknowledge that many plans and processes were new and unproven. The council's judgements relating to the rigour of safeguarding arrangements and capacity for improvement were particularly overly optimistic.

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

1. The council is performing adequately overall. Clear political commitment to improving educational attainment, effective partnerships and an increasing range of good multi-agency work result in adequate outcomes for most children and young people. However, the safety of all children and young people is inadequate and provision to support vulnerable groups, particularly children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is inconsistent. The youth offending service is adequate overall but inadequate for management.

2. The Council identified raising educational attainment as its most pressing priority and has concentrated most of its effort on this with good effect. It acknowledges that insufficient priority was afforded to maintaining robust safeguarding arrangements and is taking action to remedy this at corporate and departmental levels. Recent achievements of improving education outcomes and partnership working provide a sound basis for improving safeguarding arrangements.

3. Strategic, corporate and community plans put children and young people at the centre of the city's growth agenda. Ambitions are adequate but are not consistently articulated for the health and safety of children and young people. Priorities in the 2006 -09 CYPP are comprehensive and reflect the Every Child Matters agenda. Structures to support effective delivery of the plan are in place. A CYPSP has strong and integrated strategic leadership and appropriate representation from public and voluntary agencies. Management of services for children and young people is adequate and improving. Financial management and the delivery of value for money are adequate. However, systems to further improve value for money are not yet fully embedded. Performance management is adequate. Senior officers and elected members are committed to improving services, but the knowledge of some elected members is insufficient, and the corporate parenting function is under developed, particularly in its scrutiny of safeguarding arrangements.

4. The combined work of all local services to secure the health of children and young people is adequate. A good range of multi-agency services support most children and young people well. However, outcomes for some vulnerable groups are less satisfactory, with high levels of teenage pregnancies, substance misuse and low levels of breastfeeding. Mental health services for children and young people are inadequate overall.

5. The combined work of all local services to keep children and young people safe is inadequate. Although arrangements for responding to new referrals and to immediate children protection concerns are now robust, safeguarding arrangements for all children and young people are less secure. The reporting and investigating of child concerns is often delayed and the quality of assessment and care management is inconsistent. Increasing

provision of family support services is beginning to impact positively on the high numbers of looked after children and to increase support to vulnerable children. Looked after children receive good quality care in safe placements, but local placements are insufficient. Children and young people with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities have access to good services. However, those with moderate levels of disability and/or learning difficulty have limited choice and support.

6. The combined work of all local services to help children and young people enjoy their education and recreation and achieve well is good. The council contributes well to a good integrated strategy for childcare and early years' education. Joint working with schools has improved. Education attainment levels are improving rapidly and are within striking distance of national averages at most levels. Behaviour in schools is generally good. Levels of permanent exclusions are low. However, not all excluded pupils receive sufficient full-time education. The council promotes inclusive practice, but services are insufficient to ensure that the needs of more vulnerable groups are met consistently.

7. The combined work of all local services to help children and young people contribute to society is adequate. Some good innovative opportunities are developing to enable children and young people to take part in making decisions about local services. However, these are often initiated by young people themselves rather than through proactive engagement by agencies. Activities to reduce anti-social behaviour by young people and youth crime have yet to be effectively co-ordinated or achieve consistent results. Children and young people from vulnerable groups are insufficiently involved in all elements of consultation.

8. The combined work of all local services to help children and young people achieve economic well-being is adequate. The council's strategy for growth and regeneration has a strong emphasis on raising aspirations and increasing employable skills of young people. The council has been successful in engaging with a wide range of partners to plan and develop a coherent 14-19 strategy. However, the proportion of young people continuing in education and training beyond the age of 16 is too low. Arrangements for helping young people to leave care are insufficient. Provision for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good for those with severe needs, but less well established for those with moderate levels of need.