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Making Social Care
Better for People



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Dear Ms Grant

2006 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

This letter summarises the findings of the 2006 annual performance assessment (APA) process for your local authority. We are grateful for the information that you provided to support this process and for the time made available by yourself and your colleagues to discuss relevant issues.

Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded¹
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	2
The council's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	2
The contribution of <i>the local authority's social care services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people	1

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Grade	Service descriptors	Capacity to improve descriptors
4	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	Excellent / outstanding
3	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	Good
2	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	Adequate
1	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	Inadequate

Overall, Nottingham City Council delivered adequate services to its children and young people between 2005 and 2006. Since its last APA it has made improvements in some outcomes but there are a number of areas, particularly within social care services, where there has been too little or no improvement, which the council recognises itself as a weakness last year. The council's Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2006-2009 demonstrates that the council has a very clear view of its own weaknesses and what it needs to do better. In many areas Nottingham is operating from a very low base and raising educational attainment presents a particular challenge. Nottingham is a city with significant deprivation with nearly half its wards being amongst the most deprived in the country. There is a much larger proportion of the adult population with low skills than in the country as a whole. Nottingham has a higher than average rate of unemployment and over 40% of children and young people are affected by income deprivation. The numbers of pupils having some form of special educational need is also high. The council faces a significant challenge, which it recognises in its CYPP, in 'getting the balance right between investing in improvements to universal services and targeting scarce resources in more acute areas of need'.

Being healthy

The contribution the council's services make to improving outcomes in this area is adequate with some strengths. The council's CYPP and the local area agreement (LAA) have set priorities and performance indicators to improve the outcome of being healthy. Local health care targets for children and young people link to national targets and are met in some areas with some good initiatives in place. For example, there has been an increase in the number of schools engaged in the Healthy Schools programme with 89% of schools participating in the programme and on target to achieve the award within the national timescales. One secondary school has piloted a cycle pool, and initiatives to promote walking to school, such as Footprints and Eggs on Legs, have shown a sustained improvement from 2005/06, with the council reporting a 50% increase in participation.

The council is supporting parents and carers through various initiatives such as Sure Start schemes and the seven children's centres that have been located in the most disadvantaged areas of the city to provide advice and support for families. There are locally based midwifery services, health visiting services and community outreach services, which focus on increasing access to smoking cessation services and encouraging breastfeeding. Additionally, there are multi-agency campaigns, for example: Get Moving Nottingham and the popular Cook and Eat sessions run by the community food workers.

Despite best efforts, there is no sign or trend of significant improvement in the reduction of teenage conception rates, which was noted as an area for improvement last year. In some of the city's most deprived wards the conception rate is 2.5 times that of the national average. However, the council has focused resources in five wards where 48% of all teenage conceptions occur and there is some evidence of improving outcomes as a result.

The health of looked after children was identified in the 2005 APA letter as an area for improvement. The number of looked after children with an up to date health assessment and dental checks has increased from 52% in 2004/05 to 79% in 2005/06 and is in line with the performance of similar councils. 99% of all looked after children are now registered with a general practitioner and 73% with a dentist. Each council children's home has a designated nurse and worker for Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). A revised sexual health policy is focused on residential settings; the council, to support health promotion work with both male and female looked after children, has allocated additional resources. In 2005 priorities set through the Safe in Nottingham Strategy included the delivery of targeted substance misuse education to all looked after children. There are health support systems in place for care leavers.

Despite these support systems being in place, the Commission for Social Care Inspection's (CSCI) regulatory inspections of the council's own children's homes identified that within some of the homes, the National Minimum Standards (NMS) relating to this outcome were not met. Some health reviews had not been carried out and in other cases some actions identified at reviews had not always been followed up and acted upon. As a result, there have been direct discussions between CSCI and the council with agreement reached as to how performance will be improved and monitored and what regulatory actions CSCI will take if improvements and compliance with the NMS are not sustained.

Access to CAMHS is generally good. The council has used the CAMHS grant money to ensure that mental health service provision for children and young people is well integrated by developing multi-agency locality teams (MALTs) that offer a more flexible service and provide direct early interventions. MALTs also provide training and consultation to parents and carers and those working with children and young people.

The performance of the youth offending team (YOT) in relation to the initial screening for substance misuse and assessments within five working days for young people referred to the team has been inconsistent and often poor over the past two years. For example, the most recent data shows that during 2005 performance in relation to the above target has varied between 77.8% (June 2005) to 7.4% in the period October to December 2005. The YOT's performance in relation to the proportion of young people who access early intervention and treatment services that they require within 10 working days had been good at 100% for most of 2005 apart from October.

The council commissions its substance misuse service from an independent provider and over the past three years the level of service provided to the YOT has been inconsistent. At times this has affected both prompt access to the service and the quality of the initial assessment process. Whilst the council is belatedly taking action to ensure firm contract compliance and has put in place a range of performance measurements to monitor the agency's performance, it has allowed drift to occur and an unsatisfactory level of service to be continued without taking robust action at an earlier stage to address the deficiencies.

There is a good range of services to support the health needs of children with disabilities and complex health needs. Services are provided in conjunction with partner agencies and include community nurses, clinical nursing services, respite care services and special school nurses.

Staying safe

The contribution the council's services make to improving outcomes in this area is inadequate. However, the council can demonstrate some specific examples of good practice within schools and with some preventative community activities.

Since April 2006, under the leadership of the new Director of Children's Services (DCS), the council has taken positive action to raise its performance and improve its safeguarding arrangements with a total overhaul and re-design of its children's services. However, during the year 2005/06 it showed little or no improvement and in some instances there was a further deterioration in relation to the safeguarding performance indicators.

The annual accident mortality rate for children under 15 years of age is nearly twice that of the national average with children making up around one quarter of all Accident and Emergency (A&E) attendances. Higher levels of infant mortality and sudden infant death syndrome were identified in the 2005 APA letter as an area for a more in-depth study when the council has its joint area review (JAR) in March 2007.

The council can demonstrate that with partner agencies it has taken action to address these issues. There has been an increase in staff training and an increase in key community campaigns. For example: discouraging parents taking babies into bed with them; the delivery of safety equipment programmes across the city that has ensured free provision of stair/ safety gates, fire guards and smoke alarms; injury minimisation programmes in schools; and targeted road safety education. Recent evidence provided by the council indicates that the impact of these activities has resulted in a reduction of A&E attendance during the first two quarters of 2005/06.

Safety within schools inspected by Ofsted judged 81% of schools to be good or better in relation to pupil's being free from bullying, racism and other forms of harassment. The council's performance was in line with that of similar councils but slightly below that of the national average. Inspections this year indicate that the extent to which schools ensure learners' safety is at least satisfactory and in nearly 75% it is good or better.

The council has robust arrangements in place within schools for the early identification and tracking of any young people whose absence from school is unauthorised. Early intervention is identified as a positive activity towards keeping children and young people safe. The council has a number of interventions that it uses ranging from informal support systems to the use of Parenting Orders and as a last resort fixed penalties obtained through court action.

Positive work has been undertaken by the council in addressing the safety issues relating to children and young people as a result of domestic violence and sexual exploitation. Continuing work with the police and neighbourhood wardens to reduce sexual exploitation has resulted in a decrease in prostitution involving young people under the age of 18.

The council has strong membership and representation on the Local Children's Safeguarding Board. Local arrangements are cohesive with a range of strategies, policies and procedures in place that are fully compliant with statutory requirements and current government guidance.

The levels of deprivation in Nottingham City contribute to a higher than average number of referrals of children in need with 36.5% of referrals being repeat referrals within one year. This is significantly higher than that of similar councils and has led to the council undertaking some analysis of the reasons for the high referral and re-referral rates. Findings indicated that the council's practice had been to accept inappropriate referrals that would be better dealt with by other agencies and has been able to rectify this by revising its thresholds for service provision, signposting to other more appropriate agencies and educating other partner agencies on what constitutes an appropriate referral.

During 2005/06 referral and assessment services have performed well below that of similar councils although there had been a small improvement from 2004/05 with the number of initial assessments completed within seven working days – up from 31.5% to 34.3%. However, the completion of core assessments shows better performance by the council, but is significantly higher than that of similar councils and needs to be reviewed to ensure that core assessments are not undertaken unnecessarily.

As well as establishing new thresholds for service provision, the council has also restructured its duty and assessment service moving away from a centralised team to that of locally based teams. The council is optimistic that this will lead to significant improvements to the service during 2006/07 as early indicators from the first two quarters are that transfer times are cut down and that it has enabled a more integrated approach to the assessment process.

The 2005 APA letter identified areas of improvement as reducing the time taken to complete initial assessments and reduce the number of re-registrations and de-registrations of children on the Child Protection Register. However, during 2005/06 the council was not successful in making these improvements. There has been an increase in registrations on the Child Protection Register, an increase in re-registrations and a decrease in de-registrations, all of which place the council's performance further below that of similar councils. The council has recognised that it needs to take strong action to improve its performance and from April 2006 is developing prevention and early intervention services within its children's centres, extended schools and multi-agency locality based services. This work is in its early stages and it is too soon to judge the impact of the council's activities.

The council's provision of services to looked after children and young people has been inadequate. Placement choice has been limited and children and young people have often not been accommodated according to their assessed needs. The stability of placements for children has been variable. In the shorter-term placement stability is very good but for those children in longer-term public care it is poor. The children's homes have not always kept children and young people safe and there have been increased incidents of bullying. Elected members have shown active interest in these issues.

CSCI inspections of children's homes and the fostering service confirmed there were some serious issues that the council needed to take action on to ensure the safety and well-being of the children it cared for. The DCS has responded very positively to CSCI's intervention and is taking very robust action to completely overhaul and restructure children's services. The council has committed additional resources for improvements to be made. Consultants have been appointed and have undertaken an assessment of what actions need to be taken to improve services. The CSCI's Business Relationship Manager (BRM) and the Children's Services Advisor from the East Midlands Government Office are actively engaged with the council in ensuring the improvement plan is appropriate and acted upon in a realistic and timely manner. By July 2006, the impact of the DCS's actions indicated early signs of improved outcomes for children and young people.

Participation of looked after children and young people in their reviews has been lower than for those in similar councils. Action is being taken to address this and there should be a significant improvement during 2006. A very successful Hear by Right conference was held in February 2006 for children and young people from vulnerable groups. Safety was identified by a number of young people as a major concern with almost one third stating that they did not always feel safe in their homes and almost two thirds commenting that they did not feel safe in the area where they were living. Senior managers from the council and other partner agencies were present at the conference and gave young people an undertaking that they would take action and report back to them in July 2006 on progress. This has still to happen and the council has yet to decide on the tangible actions it is to take to address some of the issues raised by the delegates.

The council has good arrangements in place to help with the safeguarding of children with disabilities. In 2003, a multi-agency steering group was established to specifically lead on this area of work and this has now become a standing committee of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LCSB). In March 2006, new practice guidance was launched so that more children and young people with a disability can effectively communicate allegations of abuse to the Police through television and video link. Specialist communication facilities are provided to help empower children and young people to communicate effectively. A range of safety awareness activities has been devised to help children and young people understand and develop their self-awareness of dangerous and harmful situations.

Enjoying and achieving

The contribution the council's services make to improving outcomes in this area is adequate with some strengths and some deficiencies in significant areas. Services during 2005/06 can demonstrate sound impact from the initiatives they have led and supported in schools, and these are set to be rolled out more universally from September 2006. All the areas for improvement identified by the previous APA have been met.

Overall children and young people's academic performance is below, and often well below, that of statistical neighbours, and it is well below the national averages. This is the case across all phases. However, there has been improvement over time, albeit small steps, with year on year changes often above that of comparators. Significant exceptions in 2005 were writing in Key Stage 1 and English in Key Stages 2 and 3, a possible reflection of the low levels of communication, language and literacy (CLL) development that children start with in formal education settings. By the end of the Foundation Stage in 2005, for example, only 35% reached a good level of CLL and this fell to only 28% in Sure Start areas. Overall, the level of progress made in the primary schools is satisfactory and in nearly half those inspected since September 2005 it was good or better.

By the end of compulsory schooling, the GCSE results improved in 2005 to 42.0% of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades from 38.4% in 2004, and the number of pupils gaining at least one A* to G grade improved from 89.9% to 92.4%. This was an area for improvement in the previous APA. Both improvements represent sustained year on year change, and improvement above that of comparators. There was a good increase in the number of black and dual heritage boys gaining GCSEs. The pupils' value added based on their prior attainment from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 is poor, but when contexts are taken into account, this is broadly adequate overall. However, just a few secondary schools achieve well. The attainment of looked after children is unsatisfactory. The percentage of young people leaving care with five or more A* to C grades at GCSE level has significantly decreased and is below comparator groups; there has been a significant decrease in those sitting at least one GCSE or equivalent.

Inspection results in primary schools indicate that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve at least satisfactorily. At the time of the APA only one secondary school had been inspected this year.

Early Years provision is comprehensive and makes good, positive contributions towards helping young children to develop personally, socially and emotionally and to enjoy their education. Since 2005, additional support has been provided and more rigorous monitoring and challenge undertaken to ensure that standards are met for childminder, out of school and crèche provision. Recent inspections show a significant reduction in the actions against childminders at the time of registration and the authority is on track to meet its target, which is in line with the national average. Nottingham is part of the DfES pilot study into early learning opportunities for two year olds living in areas of deprivation and their impact on later educational outcomes. The Boots Books for Babies scheme has been rolled out across the city in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council, health visitors and the Library Service and its effectiveness confirmed by independent evaluation.

The school improvement service has a robust system for analysing early years attainment and has focused intensively on strategies for improving children's CLL. Training for staff in both the maintained and non-maintained sectors is due at the beginning of September 2006, to ensure consistency of provision, with half-termly monitoring. There has been an early reading development programme in ten pilot schools in different contexts which has met with good success and resulted in very significant improvement for different groups of pupils including boys, pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and high achievers at the end of Reception. This initiative is to be rolled out across the city from September 2006 with extra funding for a further consultant and further focus on embedding phonic work.

At Key Stage 2 there has been good support for better planning and effective teaching in English, linked with the Primary Strategy, with an analysis of scripts resulting in a writing programme to enable children to write with interest. Pupils in the ten schools in the writing programme have made significant gains on schools not in the programme. More strategic use of the Strategy and consultancy has been identified from September 2006. In Key Stage 3 there has been a focus on developing capacity in weaker schools, developing understanding of tracking pupils' progress, improving transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3, and working at individual pupil level. Support for self-evaluation at subject level has been a key part of raising awareness of challenge and intervention and developing departmental capacity. There has been a focus in Year 8 on differentiation in targeted intervention schools. There is judicious use of advanced skills teachers and expert teachers to support schools, and coaching is on the agenda from September. Broader provision in Key Stage 4 through implementation of the 14 to 19 Strategy, albeit at a developmental stage, is supporting some young people to re-engage with education and get better results. There is evidence of strong inter-agency support for schools to help pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The council recognises in its CYPP that the attainment of Nottingham children and young people is well below the expected level and that the number of young people who leave school with no qualification is high. It recognises, too, that there are particular groups where improvement is crucial; the attainment of looked after young people and their participation in education, training and employment following compulsory schooling, and the achievement of particular ethnic groups, particularly black boys. Linked targets in the LAA are sound. Overall, improvements in the Key Stage 2 and 3 results in 2006 and predictions for GCSE results indicate at least sound action to try to ensure good quality educational provision, and good capacity to improve.

Attendance is in line with both statistical neighbours and national averages. This has been sustained over time. The attendance of looked after children is consistently good. The authority concentrates on supporting good attendance, and has had a major review of the climate for good attendance, that has been published and discussed with headteachers. Fixed-term exclusions in both primary and secondary schools have reduced this year but are still above comparators.

Inspection results this year indicate that overall children and young people enjoy their education. There is a good range of recreational activities and out of school learning. Children are encouraged to enjoy learning both in and out of school with a range of visits and support clubs. The Museum and Galleries Service Learning and Access team has achieved national recognition for its work with schools. School visits to museums and galleries totalled over 30,000 in 2005/06 for the second year running, putting the services performance in the top quartile of unitary authorities. There are five Play Centres across the city and the play needs of different groups of children are through different targeted projects. Children, parents and support groups are regularly consulted and there is a dedicated Black minority ethnic worker tasked with ensuring inclusion.

The percentage of permanently excluded young people with 20 hours or more alternative tuition has increased significantly, although it is still just below the national average. The recent changes to the management structure have brought together provision for pupils in receipt of education otherwise than at school, resulting in Pupil Referral Units (PRU) being under single leadership to share expertise and increase consistency of provision. A protocol for admission of permanently excluded and hard to place pupils is to be implemented from September. The authority's virtual PRU, which provides education packages for Year 11 pupils and some of those Year 10 pupils without school places, was successful in 2005 in helping over half of these young people gain accreditation and in helping 70% to progress into education, employment or training.

There is a well defined system for identifying and supporting schools causing concern. Support varies from light touch to intensive, for example half of the secondary schools are in the programme with two receiving the highest levels of support. Schools are identified through intensive data interrogation and triggers such as attendance, exclusions, staffing issues including unstable leadership and finance. Nottingham had very few schools placed into a category between 2003 and 2005. This has increased slightly since September 2005. The thrust of support is in developing leadership and management capacity in the schools so that schools are better able to self-evaluate and develop their own strategies for improvement.

Parents and carers receive support in helping their children to enjoy and achieve through a variety of means; for example, awareness raising about attendance and attainment and about the wider range of qualifications at Key Stage 4, through Sure Start activities and through school progress review days, and involvement with target setting, and tasks set out in individual learning plans. Providing and improving support to parents and carers and helping them to take a more active role in their children's education is a priority in the LAA.

Making a positive contribution

The contribution the council's services make to improving outcomes in this area is adequate. Inspection outcomes show that behaviour is at least satisfactory and often much better in the schools inspected in 2005/06. Local authority action is targeted at creating a good climate for learning to promote good behaviour and attendance at school. Learning mentors support pupils with poor attendance and behaviour and a multi-agency

support team supports children aged nine to 14, particularly those vulnerable to exclusion, including looked after children to develop social skills and manage their emotions. 83% of the schools involved over 2005-06 judged the team to be effective and 90% of the young people judged their behaviour to have improved. The social, emotional aspects of learning resource was used in 96 primary schools over the year to develop emotional literacy. The authority's youth service team actively engages vulnerable and hard to reach groups in developing socially and emotionally through projects and forums and young people are actively involved in the development of their provision. The service is on track to achieve the National Quality Mark by 2007. The council recognises that its challenge is to develop a more joined-up approach to its support for young people's social and emotional development.

There are examples of effective support for young people at transition points in their lives: the use of transition learning mentors with Years 6 and 7 pupils; work with Connexions; and the retention of Personal Advisers through post-16 education into higher education. The council has improved support for young people with disabilities aged 14 and almost all now have a transition plan to support their move from children's to adult services. Targeted support is provided to looked after children and young people at key stages of their education and steps are being taken to ensure that each one actively participates in drawing up their personal education plan and that they have a pathway plan from age 15 in order to support their transition into adulthood. The council is currently working on an integrated strategy to better link the transition work of education and social care.

Further work has been undertaken in 2005/06 to enable children and young people to have a 'voice' in the community and take part in decision-making. For example, training has been provided for schools to develop schools councils and 80% of schools have now established them. The Hear by Right conference in February 2006 demonstrated the capacity to draw young people together to gather their views, including a representative range of vulnerable pupils. Contracts were signed with key decision makers, outlining future work plans on areas identified as important by the young people attending. Participation in youth elections increased with over 9,000 children and young people involved. There was an increase in the number of schools taking part in the annual primary parliament and a secondary parliament is planned for 2007. There is good provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to have a voice with good support systems to enable them to do so; for example, Makaton and the provision of communication aids. A focus group of care leavers, managed by the voluntary sector, produces a newsletter for all care leavers and those in residential care. This network feeds back to the group and then to staff. Despite these good examples of how young people can make their views known, it is recognised that there is no strategic coordination for these activities and that the outcomes of young people's views on decision-making are not necessarily followed up. The council has pledged in its CYPP to set standards and expectations across organisations for the involvement of children, young people and families in the design, delivery and evaluation of services.

The council takes action to reduce anti-social behaviour in a variety of ways and it is identified as a priority in the corporate plan. The Youth Service plays a key role in the crime and disorder partnership hotspot tasking group which analyses data from high crime

areas and tasks partners with short-term action and intervention. This might include, for example, increasing attendance on youth inclusion programmes, targeting school absentees with speedier referral to the education welfare service or children missing in education team. The youth inclusion support programmes target ten to 13 year olds and parents to identify and support young people on the periphery of offending behaviour. Links between the Police and children's homes provide looked after children and young people with support to avoid anti-social behaviour. In the CYPP the council states that engagement with and support for parents to be more involved with services aimed at ensuring positive outcomes for their children is not good enough and the council's Parenting Strategy is being developed to rectify this.

The previous APA required the council to improve its progress in reducing the rate of re-offending. This does not appear to have happened, and progress has been inadequate, although there is confusion regarding the different ways in which local and national data is collected and recorded. In the meeting with the authority it was stated that there had been a reduction in relation to serious re-offending. Nevertheless, the council prioritises it in the CYPP and states that 'the level of re-offending by young people is high and has increased. More than half of young offenders re-offended within two years'. The CYPP refers to putting in place plans and approaches to reduce the rate of re-offending.

CSCI regulatory inspections found major shortfalls in three children's homes in relation to placement plans. Children's needs have not always been assessed effectively and comprehensively. Where written placement plans have been in place outlining how identified needs will be met and implemented, CSCI inspections during 2005 found that they have not always been acted upon. During 2005/06 some inappropriate placements were limiting some children's capacity to make a positive contribution; this has required on-going intervention and follow-up from CSCI.

Achieving economic well-being

The contribution the council's services make to improving outcomes in this area is adequate with some stronger points. There is an established service providing information about childcare and related services to parents and carers and the numbers of users continues to grow. It includes an on-line service. Joint working between this service and JobCentre Plus ensures that information on childcare, training and employment opportunities are actively promoted.

Inspection evidence from September 2005 to April 2006 indicates that almost all primary school pupils develop work-based learning skills which will help them with their economic well-being at least satisfactorily and in more than half the schools this was good or very good.

The current attainment of GCSE results being below the national standards at the end of Key Stage 4 does not support enough young people in their achievement of economic well-being. Moreover, the performance of students who took Advanced Level qualifications in 2005 was broadly in line with similar local authorities, but below the national averages.

The council's CYPP recognises that too many young people in Nottingham are not engaged in education, employment and training (NEET) and this figure has increased year on year since 2003. Decreasing the proportion of young people NEET is listed as a priority in the LAA with suitable and realistic targets set for different groups.

The number of care leavers leaving at the end of compulsory schooling who did not go into any form of employment, education and training in 2005 was high. Those aged 19 who were in employment, education or training in 2005/06 was average but below the figures for national comparators although twelve went on to university. Support for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good with 87% of leavers going into some form of education, employment or training. The Local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC) has agreed a framework for the strategic development and management of post-16 provision for students with learning difficulties and/or difficulties to ensure appropriate and accessible provision.

The authority sees the broadening of provision in Key Stage 4 and beyond as key to better engaging their young people. The 14 to 19 Strategy is gaining momentum. During 2005/06 it has very much been at a developmental stage with schools, colleges and employers piloting various initiatives in schools and beyond to broaden the curriculum and provide alternative options to GCSE, such as vocational accreditation, flexible routes through 14 to 19, and re-engagement with learning for some young people, including creative work placements. The strategy is supported by three area groups in a partnership with the LLSC, schools, the two further education colleges and Connexions. Curriculum development groups have been created to establish the development and delivery of fourteen vocational learning lines, five of which are due to be in place by 2008 and all fourteen by 2013. They are led by schools with input from colleges and training providers. One college has agreed to provide transition tutors, working in schools but employed by the college. Schools are already expanding their vocational curriculum and intensive work has been done with some schools to pilot the functional literacy and numeracy qualification in Key Stage 4. This is proving popular with young people who like its adult nature; it is reported that it has helped some to achieve better coursework.

Open college network accreditation has been introduced in learning units and special schools resulting in more young people gaining formal accreditation of their achievements. The LLSC and Connexions are targeting young people to improve the numbers achieving at least one Level 2 qualification through 1-2-1 information, advice and guidance, interview and intervention. A review of the arrangements for coordinating alternative provision for vulnerable young people has been undertaken by key providers and referral agencies, and has identified the need for a central referral service to coordinate the placement of young people and ensure that gaps in appropriate provision are identified and filled. Targeted work is undertaken with under achieving groups. For example, the Black Achievement Strategy supports continued underachievement of young black learners. In 2005 there was an increase in black boys achieving GCSEs. A group of young people has been targeted as of September, including, for example, those at risk of exclusion, to work with and develop personalised learning programmes.

The council has a corporate approach to work experience opportunities for young people at school and post-16 apprenticeships through its Local Jobs for Local People Initiative which sets targets to local employers for the provision of work placements. As one of the largest employers, the council has a large role in this; an interesting placement with the Parks Department has taken place this year which has led to an appraisal of ways to develop a secure labour force. Another development, Entry to Employment (E2E), is situated in the most deprived communities and aimed at young people from black minority ethnic groups, looked after young people, young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; it involves the voluntary sector. More of the young people on E2E in Nottingham progress onto full employment, work based learning or further education than those nationally.

There has been improvement in housing and accommodation for care leavers. Most care leavers age 19 found suitable accommodation, although the figures are below those of national comparators.

Surplus places in schools are being reduced through the council's reorganisation which includes involvement in Building Schools for the Future, and the development of three more Academies. Schools facing imminent closure are supported through the Schools Requiring Support and Intervention programme.

The council's management of its services for children and young people, including its capacity to improve them further

Corporately, the council and its partners provided adequate leadership and management, but with some significant shortcomings in relation to the outcomes of staying safe and social care during 2005/06. Whilst improvements identified in the 2005 APA letter had largely been addressed in relation to education and attainment issues, the evidence relating to social care did not support similar action where generally the position remained static or poor. The appointment of the DCS from 1 April 2006 is starting to have a positive impact upon the social care aspect of children's services. There is now strong leadership and clear structures in place with early evidence of improved outcomes for those children and young people who receive social care services. Increased financial investment in children's social care services, some restructuring within specific service areas, some personnel changes and a stronger commitment from elected members suggests that the council has adequate capacity to significantly improve its performance during 2006/07, despite inadequate performance in some areas.

Corporately there have been significant omissions in tackling some areas for improvement noted in the APA letter 2005 which have resulted in inadequate outcomes for particular groups of children and young people. There was evidence of some satisfactory partnerships working together to deliver a service to make a difference to children and young people in many areas across the council, for example, multi-agency locality teams, but weaknesses in other areas such as those directed at some substance misuse services for young offenders.

In its medium term financial plan the council showed clear commitment to its schools, youth and community and social care, and made provision for areas of development in line with priorities. Nottingham City's funding is generous compared to similar authorities and nationally. Recruitment and retention are satisfactory. Performance management, acknowledged at the time of the last APA as an area for development, has only just begun to be tackled seriously. Arising out of the performance management information data the council needs to ensure that it has robust risk and contingency plans in place that are developed in a timely manner.

The council achieved Level 3 of the Equality Standard in December 2005 and are apparently on track to achieve Level 4 by March 2007. Equalities impact assessments are apparently routinely carried out on existing and new policies, procedures and practices. It has recently been carried out on the CYPP resulting in some amendments.

The ambitions of the council and its partners are clearly set out in the CYPP and based on a realistic self-assessment, linked to the relatively ambitious targets outlined in the LAA. The CYPP is not as specific as it could be about how objectives will be met or accountability, and there is no costing. This is apparently achieved through a plethora of other plans including those of partners, other key plans and delivery plans. The council has not achieved a reduction in plans as suggested in the guidance on producing the CYPP. Further needs analysis has been undertaken to develop the Floor Targets Action Plan to target strategic action in identified wards with particular groups to reduce teenage conception, raise the attainment of black and minority ethnic children and young people, and improve 14 to 19 provision in areas of disadvantage.

The strategic partnership for children, young people and families has agreed the principles for the development of joint commissioning to support the delivery of the CYPP. Gaps in services have been identified and future commissioning will be matched to the priorities in the CYPP. Over the coming year the council intends to increase capacity in relation to joint commissioning. The council is developing processes to improve value for money.

Key strengths and areas for improvement

Key strengths	Key areas for improvement
<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some good initiatives in schools to improve the health of children • access to CAMHS is good • a good range of services to support the health needs of children with disabilities and complex health needs. 	<p><i>Being healthy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce teenage pregnancies • ensure that in all children's homes the NMS in relation to being healthy are consistently met • improve the consistency of initial screening for substance misuse and assessments within five days.

<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • health and safety in schools • the arrangements to safeguard children with disabilities. 	<p><i>Staying safe:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the process and rate of referral and assessment of children in need • reducing the time taken to complete initial assessments of children on the Child Protection Register • reducing re-registrations and de-registrations of children on the Child Protection Register • the provision of services to looked after children and young people, most importantly keeping them safe.
<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early years provision is good • support for early years providers and schools to improve achievement is good • support for schools causing concern is effective overall • support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good • attendance has improved and is in line with national comparators • the attendance of looked after children is good • there is a comprehensive range of play and out of school learning opportunities. 	<p><i>Enjoying and achieving:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve the attainment of looked after young people • improve standards overall and especially in secondary schools where there is underachievement • continue to improve attendance and reduce the rate of exclusions from school.
<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the behaviour of pupils in schools is satisfactory and often good or better • there are some good examples of support for transition • there are some good initiatives for giving all children and young people a voice. 	<p><i>Making a positive contribution:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decrease the rate of re-offending • ensure that the views of all children and young people are considered and contribute to the decision-making process.
<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the developing 14 to 19 curriculum and pathways. 	<p><i>Achieving economic well-being:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decrease the number of young people not in education, employment and training, including care leavers and other vulnerable groups.

<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the services for school improvement • financial commitment for achieving priorities. 	<p><i>Management of children's services:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve the effectiveness of services to looked after children and young people • improve the effectiveness of the youth offending team.
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Aspects for focus in a future joint area review or the next APA

- Progress is made in improving standards and achievement.
- Effective action is taken regarding issues relating to safeguarding arrangements including the placement, care arrangements and outcomes for children and young people requiring public care.
- Review the progress being made in reducing the numbers of young people not in employment, education or training.
- Review the progress being made in decreasing the re-offending rates and the performance and management arrangements of the youth offending team.

We confirm that the children's services grade will provide the score for the children and young people service block in the comprehensive performance assessment and will be published to the Audit Commission. The social care judgement is for CSCI's information only.

Yours sincerely



FLO HADLEY

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 Office for Standards in Education



JONATHAN PHILLIPS

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