



**Better
education
and care**

Joint area review

London Borough of Newham
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 seven inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), the Healthcare Commission (CHAI), 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 Newham 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:

- a self-assessment undertaken by local public service providers
- a survey of children and young people
- performance data
- the findings of the contemporaneous inspection of the youth service
- planning documents
- information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day-care provision
- evidence gathered during the earlier Youth Offending Team (YOT) inspection
- briefings from staff within inspectorates, commissions and other public bodies in contact with local providers.

6. The second stage included 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 Forest Gate and Little Ilford. It also included gathering evidence on nine key judgements, selected because of their critical importance to improving outcomes for children and young people in the local area. This included discussions 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. The London Borough of Newham is three miles from the centre of London with good transport links through the City Airport, Docklands Light Railway, and mainline and underground rail services. There is a population of 254,000 with 40% under 25 years old, and 38% of households have dependent children, a higher proportion than anywhere in the country. Newham is, almost uniformly, a disadvantaged area, eleventh highest nationally in the indices of multiple deprivation. There are consistently higher birth and infant mortality rates than the national average. Mobility in and out of Newham is the highest of all the London boroughs. Newham is the most ethnically diverse borough in the country: in 2001, 77% of children and young people were from Black and minority ethnic groups, and two out of three school-age children speak English as an additional language.

8. The Mayor is directly elected as the council's political leader and heads a cabinet of Labour councillors. The council established an integrated children and young people's service in 2005, and the executive director and lead member are in place. Senior appointments were made towards the end of 2005, and the new structure was implemented in January 2006.

9. There is a history of partnership working across agencies. Newham has an overarching Vision 2010 which links to the various planning strands. A draft children and young people's plan (CYPP) informs, and is in turn informed by, the community strategy and the corporate plan. Planning throughout is based on the five outcomes in Every Child Matters. Following consultation with partners, the council is working towards establishing a children's trust. A youth parliament has been established.

10. Within the borough there are 66 primary schools, 15 secondary schools, two special schools, and two pupil referral units.

11. London East Learning and Skills Council works with the local authority, colleges, training providers, and schools in addressing the 14-19 strategy. Post-16 education and training is provided by Newham College of Further Education, the sixth form college NewVic, and the joint sixth form centre for the two Roman Catholic schools. The Building Crafts College is a centre for construction training. Four work based learning providers are based in Newham but over 60 others provide training for Newham young people. Some unemployed young

people attend training funded by Jobcentre Plus. Entry to Employment (E2E) and work-based learning provision is coordinated by several local consortia of training providers. Adult and community learning, including family learning, is provided by the local authority in colleges, libraries and schools. A school specialising in learning difficulties has two sites, one for under-16s and one for 16-19 year olds. The University of East London provides local progression into higher education.

12. There are just over 700 looked after children and approximately two-thirds are placed outside the borough.

13. Primary care for children in Newham is commissioned by the Newham Primary Care Trust (PCT). The PCT provides both community health services for children and young people and also the acute paediatric service based in Newham University Hospital Trust. Neonatal services are provided jointly by the hospital trust and the PCT. Children's mental health services are provided by East London and The City Mental Health NHS Trust which also provides services to Hackney, Tower Hamlets, and the City of London. The trusts providing health services for the children of Newham, with the exception of the ambulance service, fall within the North East London Strategic Health Authority (which will become part of the London Health Authority from July 2006).

14. The Metropolitan Police Force serves Newham and is a key partner.

15. The borough has a number of major projects underway with the Thames Gateway, the development of Stratford City and the regeneration of Canning Town. An additional 50,000 homes are being created. The borough was part of a successful bid in 2005 to host the Olympics and Paralympics in 2012.

Summary Report

Outcomes for children and young people

16. **Outcomes for children and young people in Newham are generally good and some are outstanding. Children and young people appear safe.** Strong ambitions, good leadership, effective partnerships and well-targeted action result in generally positive outcomes. In an area of high social and economic disadvantage, agencies work effectively and imaginatively to significantly improve opportunities for children and their families. This is leading to healthier lifestyles and lives for many children and young people, although a number of challenges remain, including high rates of infant mortality, low birth weight babies, and poor oral health among many. Agencies work well together to protect children, although there is no common threshold for intervention and initial referrals are not always responded to promptly and effectively. School attendance is high and progress in raising standards is very good. Prompt and suitable arrangements are made for children who are excluded from school. Leisure and sports facilities are used by high numbers of

children. The contribution of children and young people to planning and decision-making in the borough is outstanding and this has led to many improvements, including changes to school meals, provision for pregnant teenagers and a restructure of the YOT. Young people have an unusually wide range of opportunities to continue their education and training, and high numbers take these up. Youth unemployment has traditionally been high but is now reducing well. Adequate housing is available for vulnerable young people, including secure council accommodation and targeted support to help sustain their tenancies, but there is a shortage of suitable long-term accommodation.

The impact of local services

Being healthy

17. **The work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good.** There is strong partnership working in Newham to improve outcomes for children and young people. The provision of services to support parents is well co-ordinated, user-friendly and reflects the needs of the community served. Children's lifestyles are improving, with more children in schools eating healthy food and increasing numbers participating in physical activities. Their developments in speech, language and social skills are good. Parents are empowered to take an active role in a wide range of activities to improve their children's health, development and social skills. Education programmes for family learning are of good quality and have given parents added skills and confidence to manage children's behaviour appropriately. More mothers are breastfeeding due to support from midwives and health visitors, and effective action has reduced smoking among young people. The reported immunisation rate remains lower than the national average but action is improving uptake and the quality of data collection. The authority has recognised the need to reduce high rates of infant mortality and low birth weight babies and has developed a clear strategy for improvement.

18. Outreach provision to improve oral health is having a positive impact on uptake. A multi-disciplinary health promotion programme delivered to schools provides children and young people with information on a range of health topics, and school nurses and other public health workers are promoting the strategy in schools and communities to reduce obesity. The health needs of looked after children are given high priority and nearly all have received health assessments with reciprocal arrangements in place for those placed outside the authority. Having started from a high rate, teenage pregnancy has reduced significantly in comparison with other London boroughs. The provision of services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Some young people with acute mental health needs have to wait too long for services.

Staying safe

19. **The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is adequate.** There is good information for parents, carers, and children and young people, and initiatives are in place to raise awareness of safety issues. There have been above-average reductions in deaths and serious injuries to children and young people. Work to reduce domestic violence, bullying and anti-social behaviour is a priority and is effective. The police work well with schools to reduce the incidence and fear of crime. Staff working with children are checked appropriately. The threshold to social care services is high and the response to some referrals, including some relating to sexual abuse, is insufficiently robust. The Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC) is effective and child protection procedures are in place. The number of children on the child protection register is high, and, of these, an exceptionally low proportion is recorded as relating to sexual abuse. All children on the child protection register and those looked after by the council are allocated to a qualified social worker.

20. Services for looked after children are a council priority and are identified in key plans. There have been investments in preventative services and the size of the looked after population has stabilised in line with comparable councils. High numbers of these children and young people are placed outside the authority. Multi-agency training is good and there is evidence of good partnership working. Placement stability has improved and is currently good. The quality of case files and casework is varied, and evidence of analysis and planning was lacking in some of the files seen during the review. Auditing in social care services is inadequate. There is good inter-agency planning for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the quality of services is adequate. Some carers without a diagnosis find it difficult to access social care services because they do not reach the threshold. Carers who receive a diagnosis are not automatically connected to services that will help them to understand the implications for the care of their children. Carers, especially those without a diagnosis, have little knowledge of their rights to have their own needs assessed.

Enjoying and achieving

21. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is outstanding.** Information, advice and support for parents and carers are very good. EarlyStart is a universal service across the borough, demonstrating the commitment of the council to preparing all young children well for school. A very good integrated strategy is delivered effectively and children's centres offer a wide range of services to children and families. Progress in raising standards is good or better against comparators in nearly all respects. Newham counters underachievement very effectively through a range of outstanding practice, with outcomes in GCSEs higher than comparators and in line with national averages. Young people are very positive about their school experience

and have high aspirations to continue in post-16 education. Support for school improvement and self-evaluation is effective and well-received. The council manages school attendance successfully. There are low rates of primary exclusion, but secondary permanent exclusions are marginally above comparators, particularly for some minority ethnic groups, for example African-Caribbean boys and other vulnerable groups. The council promotes maximum access and participation in leisure and sports facilities and has one of the most extensive free community sports programmes for children and young people in the country. The forward planning necessary to sustain improved academic outcomes and attendance of looked after children is not yet robust enough. Newham is at the leading edge of inclusive practice in education and, as a result, virtually all children with special or additional needs are educated and supported effectively within mainstream schools. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities succeed well in mainstream schools and colleges.

Making a positive contribution

22. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is outstanding. Effective multi-agency partnerships and well-targeted action promote equality and reduce disadvantage. Very good support for personal, social and emotional development contributes to positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour among children and young people. Children and young people take their responsibilities as community members very seriously, with some very significant contributions to voluntary activities. Children and their families receive good support to manage major challenges in their lives. A very good range of opportunities enable large numbers of children and young people to make decisions about services and influence their current and future delivery. The exceptional work of the Youth Parliament is particularly noteworthy. Almost all young people who responded to a survey for the review feel safe and happy at school. Good action prevents anti-social behaviour and reduces youth crime. Children and young people who are looked after and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well to make a positive contribution.

23. The impact of the youth service is uneven. The quality of the youth work seen during the inspection varied from outstanding to inadequate; while about a third of the sessions were good or outstanding, a similar proportion was poor.

Achieving economic well-being

24. The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is outstanding. Families have good access to well-targeted family learning and information services. Staying-on and retention rates are very good and educational outcomes for young people have risen sharply and are above national averages. Young people, including those with disabilities, have an exceptionally broad and expanding range of opportunities to participate in learning. Participation in work-based learning is extremely high. Advice and guidance is readily

accessible and there are very successful initiatives to re-engage disaffected young people. An energetic vision for sustainable community regeneration sets ambitious targets, supported by innovative projects to improve families' economic well-being. Youth unemployment is high, particularly among care leavers, but is reducing well. Homeless 16-17 year olds are prioritised for appropriate interventions and offered a good range of support to help them to achieve greater independence. Care leavers are offered some secure council tenancies and receive a range of financial and housing support. Nevertheless, young people find it difficult to secure suitable long term housing. There are plans to develop 50,000 homes and it is expected that the needs of young people will be addressed within this development. Pilot employment and training projects are improving. Good arrangements support young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in transitions, accommodation, continuing in education, and developing independence.

Service management

25. **The management of services for children and young people and the capacity to improve further are good.** The council's self assessment reflects the strengths and areas for development accurately, although some weaknesses in the youth service and social care are not fully recognised.

26. There are extremely strong, long-term and challenging ambitions for children and young people and an excellent commitment from all agencies to improve outcomes for all. Ambitions are based on a thorough understanding of the complex and changing needs of the area.

27. Prioritisation of the needs of children and young people is good. There has been close involvement of all stakeholders, including children and young people, in developing these priorities. Newham's approach to inclusion is excellent. Most services and outcomes are improving in line with priorities. There is an inconsistent approach to aligning budgets with priorities in some areas and to using risk management to improve service delivery. Leadership and management of the Youth Service are inadequate.

28. The capacity of the council to improve further is good. Members and officers are clear about their different roles and responsibilities. The draft CYPP is a robust document developed after extensive consultation. There is a mature and productive relationship with schools.

29. Overall, services provide good value for money. Value for money is good in education, adequate in social care but inadequate in the youth service. There has been a strong track record of delivering educational improvement to diverse and vulnerable groups and there is every confidence that innovative approaches can now be applied to weaker areas of children's services.

30. Performance management is adequate. The council has an excellent, proactive and innovative approach to seeking the views of children and young people to help improve services. Services are regularly monitored but this has

not always led to a strategic understanding of service issues in order to deliver improvements. Data collection and its use are good in education but weaker in social care. The council is working to embed performance management systems across the organisation.

Grades

Grades awarded:

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

	Local services overall	Council services	Health services
Being healthy	3		
Staying safe	2		
Enjoying and achieving	4		
Making a positive contribution	4		
Achieving economic well-being	4		
Service management	3		
Capacity to improve	3	3	
Children's services		3	
The education service		4	
The social care services for children		2	
The health service for children			3

Recommendations

For immediate action

- The council and its partners should agree and implement appropriate and consistent thresholds for referral to social care.
- The council should ensure the effective management of initial referrals.
- The ACPC should ensure that cases of sexual abuse are identified appropriately and that suitable action is taken.

For action over the next six months

- The council should strengthen performance management to:
 - identify weaknesses in services and emerging trends at an early stage
 - improve the auditing and quality of case files and care planning in social care.
- The council and its partners should reduce the number of permanent exclusions among some ethnic minorities, vulnerable groups, and those with statements of special educational need
- The council and its partners should improve the coordination of information data systems to increase participation in education, employment and training post 16.
- The health service should improve the availability of mental health provision to reduce waiting times between assessment and treatment for those with acute needs.
- The council should improve the leadership and management of the youth service to:
 - better address corporate targets
 - improve the quality of youth work practice.

For action in the longer term

- The council should reduce the number of looked after children placed outside the authority.
- The council and its partners should ensure a sustained improvement in outcomes in education, training, and employment for looked after children.
- The council and its partners should secure longer-term funding for initiatives in education, training and employment.

Main Report

Outcomes for children and young people

31. Outcomes for children and young people in Newham are generally good and some are outstanding.

32. **Health outcomes for children and young people are adequate and improving.** Physical outcomes vary and a number are better than the national average. Good support for parents and carers through the EarlyStart programme has improved children's health. There is good antenatal and postnatal care and a dedicated midwife works with vulnerable groups. The number of mothers who have initiated breastfeeding is significantly higher than the national average. A range of programmes enables parents and carers to

manage children's development and behaviour appropriately. Immunisation rates are low but rapidly improving. The number of low birth weights and the rate of infant mortality are both significantly higher than comparators. Oral health is poor but outreach services are improving the uptake of dental care. The healthy eating programme in schools has resulted in greater awareness and improved school meal provision. Physical activity in schools is higher than the national average. There is a downward trend in smoking among young people, the rate of chlamydia is reducing, but remains above the national average, and there is a significantly greater reduction in teenage pregnancy than in other London boroughs. The number of young people taking Class A drugs has also reduced. Young people who self-harm receive prompt assessments and support. Mental health services offer rapid assessments, but the provision of treatment can be delayed for those with acute needs. Nearly all looked after children and young people receive appropriate health assessments. A wide range of services is available for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and work in the special schools has led to improvements in behaviour, self-esteem and achievement for these children and young people.

33. Children and young people appear safe. Good information of safety issues has led to an above-average reduction in deaths and serious injuries to children and young people. Work to reduce domestic violence, bullying and anti-social behaviour is generally effective. Multi-agency services, policies and procedures are in place to safeguard children. There have been investments in preventative services and the size of the looked after population has stabilised and is in line with comparators. The number of looked after children in stable placements is good. There are high numbers on the child protection register, but anomalies in categorisation with exceptionally low levels of sexual abuse being recorded. This raises concerns that sexual abuse is not being identified effectively and that planning may fail to adequately address the children's needs. Both de-registration and re-registration rates are higher than comparator councils. Children are benefiting from more consistent social work as a result of effective initiatives to recruit and retain staff. Multi-agency training is good and there is evidence of good partnership working. All children on the child protection register and those looked after by the council are allocated a qualified social worker. New concerns referred by other agencies are not always responded to effectively by social care services. The quality of services to children with disabilities is adequate with good inter-agency planning.

34. Children and young people achieve very well. A range of impressive outcomes for children and young people is evident. Young children make very good progress from a low baseline, as many understand little English when they start in early years settings. Most children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and supported well. Overall, identified vulnerable and minority ethnic groups make very good progress given their starting points. Educational standards achieved by the majority of children have shown consistent improvements, with GCSE results higher than similar authorities and in line with national averages. Pupils increase their rate of progress in most

subjects as they move through school. In 2005 at Key Stage 4, progress was very good, with Newham placed fourth nationally for value added from Key Stages 2 to 4, and second nationally for Key Stages 3 to 4. In 2005, results at Key Stage 4 were among the most improved in the country. School attendance is very good. Most pupils excluded at Key Stage 3 are rapidly returned to school. Permanent exclusions from primary schools are low but there is a rising trend in permanent exclusions from secondary schools, with an over-representation of some minority groups, specifically pupils with statements of special educational need, White British, and Black Caribbean pupils. Achievement and attendance of children looked after by the council has recently improved although performance has varied over the last three years. The majority of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are educated in mainstream schools and achieve well. Children and young people enjoy a wide range of high-quality recreational activities and voluntary learning provision and the level of participation has shown a consistent increase. A high proportion of the young people responding to a survey for the review were very positive about their school experience and have high aspirations to continue in full-time education post-16.

35. Children and young people have an outstanding range of opportunities to make decisions and take personal responsibility and many make a very significant contribution to their communities.

Effective partnerships with statutory, voluntary and community groups, innovative use of funding, well-targeted services and good multi-agency action promote equality and reduce disadvantage. Very good support for personal, social and emotional development contributes to positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour. Young people's understanding of their civil and legal rights and responsibilities, and the effectiveness of the council's support for combating racism show them taking their responsibilities as community members very seriously, with some outstanding contributions. Children and their families, including those from vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups, receive good support to manage major challenges in their lives but the contribution from some youth service work leads to some inadequate outcomes. A very good range of opportunities enable children and young people to make decisions about services. Many take part in these and the Youth Parliament is outstanding in its work, which has included influencing the priorities in the CYPP. Almost all young people feel safe and happy at school and most say their views make a difference to what happens. A higher-than-average number find it easy to have a say and make a difference in the way things are run in the local area. A high proportion of young people take part in voluntary activities. Good action prevents anti-social behaviour and reduces youth crime. The number of offences committed by young people has reduced substantially and re-offending rates remain lower than comparators. Children and young people who are looked after by the council and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well to make a positive contribution.

36. Children and young people are able to achieve economic well-being and are prepared well for working life. Overall, young people age 16-19 make very good progress. Beyond the age of 16, they achieve higher standards than would be expected given their prior educational attainment. Pass rates in all types of learning are above the national average. Participation in further education has increased and learners' achievements have improved in 2004/05. An exceptionally high number of young people are in work based learning, and achievements are satisfactory. Outcomes for those in E2E, a particularly vulnerable group of learners, are good. Progression to higher education is slightly below the national average but is rising rapidly.

The impact of local services

Being healthy

37. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good.

38. Effective partnerships and good strategic direction produce positive outcomes for children and young people across the borough. A strong emphasis on joint working with key statutory agencies, voluntary organisations and local communities tackles health inequalities. Health services are accessible and meet the needs of diverse communities, and parents and carers are well supported in caring for their children.

39. Health visitors carry out health screening on very young children in community venues to increase access to early assessment. EarlyStart programmes across the borough have been very successful in improving children's health and supporting parents and carers. Children are eating more healthy food in schools, and speech, language and social skills have improved. The maternity and child health services provide good antenatal and postnatal care and a dedicated midwife works with the early years' team to target vulnerable groups. Midwives and health visitors successfully promote breastfeeding and offer additional support to young mothers. The number of mothers who have initiated breastfeeding is significantly higher than the national average. A ten-week programme of well-designed, local and accessible initiatives such as parenting classes, healthy eating, and baby massage successfully meet the needs of parents and carers.

40. Immunisation uptake for the under-fives is low but improving and remains a priority for partner agencies. Health visitors are proactive in giving appropriate 'on the spot' immunisation to increase uptake, and the PCT is reviewing data collection and monitoring processes to rectify the current under-reporting. The number of low birth weight babies and high infant mortality rates are of concern, but a sound strategy is now in place to help address inequalities and differential mortality rates across the borough. Four additional midwives have been recruited to work with vulnerable families and local communities, and targeted work in schools to reduce smoking is proving

successful. School nurses work effectively with the police and other agencies to deliver health promotion programmes on a range of topics including healthy eating, drug misuse, and sex and relationships. Oral health is poor and a high percentage of under-fives have untreated dental decay and abscesses, but a clear oral health strategy is in place which is beginning to improve access to dental care.

41. An effective strategy to promote healthier lifestyles is well established with access to a range of good health advice to enable children and young people to make choices. There is a good obesity and linked nutrition strategy setting out clear objectives and timescales for action. The healthy eating programme is implemented in the majority of schools, resulting in greater awareness and changed behaviour towards healthy eating. There is wide community involvement by teachers, health professionals, parents, and children and young people in promoting physical activity in schools. There is a good range of initiatives to increase participation in sports, including 'Going for Gold' which was extremely successful in attracting 63,000 young people to try 26 Olympic sports. Access to exercise in schools, free access to gyms, yoga classes in primary schools and other activities are making a difference to children's health.

42. Children in hospital receive good support for their well-being and education. A specialist nurse works well with unaccompanied minors new to the borough to ensure that their health, social, and emotional needs are identified and addressed.

43. Services are well co-ordinated for young people with complex needs and there is special provision for screening and family support, for example for those affected by sickle cell anaemia. Young people with HIV transferring from the paediatric to the teenager clinic receive seamless services. The SHINE (Sexual Health in Newham) service ensures vulnerable children and young people are aware of emergency contraceptive advice and information to improve their sexual health. The rate of chlamydia amongst young people is reducing but remains above the national average.

44. Multi-agency training on sex and relationships ensures consistent messages to young people, and good collaborative work with pharmacists, schools, and Connexions staff has resulted in a significantly greater reduction in teenage pregnancy than in other London boroughs. This reduction includes girls who are looked after by the council. Two male sexual health development workers have been recruited to improve the uptake of services by boys. The substance misuse strategy is effective and resulting in the early detection of drug misuse by the most vulnerable. The Children's Fund and Newham PCT fund a range of voluntary sector programmes to promote drugs awareness and education. Partnership work has reduced the number of young people taking Class A drugs. All young people who offend receive a mental health assessment and are referred for substance misuse screening. There is good resettlement and aftercare provision for young people in custody who misuse substances.

45. Effective action between schools and health professionals promotes the mental health of children and young people. In one extended school, pupils and their families are provided with valued support on mental health issues, healthy bodies, and healthy minds by a home/school liaison worker. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) rapidly assess young people with acute needs but there can be too long a delay before treatment. Counselling and therapy services are of good quality and accessible to children and young people although, increasingly, demand exceeds supply. All under 16s who self harm receive a psycho-social assessment before they leave hospital. All 16-18 year olds who self-harm have a joint assessment with social services and are referred to a psychiatrist. Young people caring for adults with HIV and AIDS are well supported.

46. The health needs of looked after children are well catered for by a team of health professionals. Nearly all looked after children have received health assessments, a significant improvement over the past two years, and they have access to a helpful range of information, advice and to free leisure activities. The PCT funds a GP to work with the looked after children's nurse to ensure that care plans are coordinated, and to undertake assessments, reviews and immunisations. Clear strategies support looked after girls who become mothers and their babies. Looked after children in the borough have priority access to CAMHS, although provision is less accessible for those placed externally.

47. Health and social care are increasingly providing an integrated service for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and a joint budget was implemented in April 2006. A database of all children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and a wide range of services and information are readily available. Parents and children who access services receive excellent support, including referral to national centres of excellence. However, some carers of children without a diagnosis are concerned over significant difficulties in accessing information and services, which has a negative effect on their ability to help their children. Special schools support mental health needs effectively, with improvements in behaviour, self-esteem, and achievement. Training for parents with children under five with hearing loss is improving their skills and ability to communicate and care for their children. A school nurse works with the child development centre to provide appropriate support for the sexual health needs of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Staying safe

48. The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is adequate.

49. There is a good range of information, activities and schemes in place about risks and how to stay safe. Newham has had above average success in reducing serious and fatal accidents to children. There is a successful and well-regarded strategy to reduce the level of domestic violence but levels of crime,

domestic violence and substance abuse are high in the borough. The police have safer neighbourhood teams in all wards and work in most secondary schools. Victimisation levels have reduced. The majority of young people have never been bullied and over half feel safe in their neighbourhood.

50. The threshold to social care services is high. The responses by the Central Assessment and Investigation Teams (CAIT) to some referrals, including those related to alleged sexual abuse, are inappropriate,. This results in delayed or no response in some cases. The ACPC is an effective driver of the local multi-agency child protection agenda. The recommendations of serious case reviews are appropriately implemented. A new Local Safeguarding Children Board will operate from April 2006. Pan-London child protection procedures are in place. High numbers of children are placed on the child protection register compared with similar councils, but only one child is registered as a sexual abuse case: this raises concerns that, while risks are being identified, incidences of sexual abuse are not being categorised appropriately.

51. Appropriate processes are established for the vetting of staff, contractors and volunteers. No staff are allowed to take up post until all checks are cleared and are they are rechecked routinely every three years. There has been a significant reduction in the use of locum staff in social care services. An effective range of local initiatives attracts, retains and develops staff. Social workers are well supervised and feel effectively supported by their managers. There is, however, some evidence of pressure on managers' time in CAIT, which reduces their ability to keep children safe.

52. Partnership working is good and this is reflected in the quality of files kept by a range of agencies. Shared protocols are in place with local mosques, community mental health services and adult learning disability services. Operational difficulties between community adult mental health services and children's social care services result in some poor practice, but partners are beginning to make improvements. The child and adolescent mental health service holds regular and useful surgeries providing support and care consultation for youth inclusion project workers.

53. All children on the child protection register are allocated to a qualified social worker. Reviews and core groups are well attended. Child protection reviews take place on time and have independent chairs, but they are hampered in their work as they do not receive copies of the core group plans. There are shortcomings in child protection plans and care plans, which are often little more than lists of tasks and lack clear objectives.

54. All agencies have systems to track children and young people coming into the borough. A dedicated social worker supports private foster carers and a neighbourhood renewal fund project improves corporate awareness and identification of privately fostered children.

55. A good range of preventative services is provided by local voluntary organisations and statutory agencies. There are effective preventative services

for older children and their families on the verge of breakdown, and for children with serious conduct disorders in order to support families and prevent children being looked after. The rise in the number of looked after children has recently stabilised, although the majority are placed outside the borough due to a shortage of foster carers. Looked after children are adequately safeguarded and all are allocated a qualified social worker. The placement advice and monitoring service has improved both the quality of placements and placement stability. There are sound procedures in place to safeguard looked after children missing from care.

56. There is a well-developed children's rights service. However, some representations made by children and young people are not dealt with as complaints. The children's rights service interviews all Newham children who abscond from placements and any child in the community who runs away from home: this helps to safeguard them. All reviews of looked after children take place within statutory timescales and are chaired by independent reviewing officers. Final warnings and convictions of looked after children are now commendably half the national average.

57. The quality of social care case files is variable and they lack chronologies and summaries. The analysis underpinning case planning is often sparse. A significant majority of looked after children have pathway plans to guide their transition to adulthood. Auditing of files is inadequate and resulting information is not collated or used to improve practice. There is a lack of a quality assurance culture in social care to drive up standards.

58. Inter-agency planning for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective. Respite and support services are good and have increased in quantity and choice. The multi-agency complex case panel works effectively to agree appropriate resources and the number of out-of-borough placements for children with disabilities is reducing. Some carers, where the child has not been diagnosed, find significant difficulty accessing social care services and have little knowledge of their right to an assessment of their own needs. Some parents and carers are unaware of the reference point for information and counselling when children are first diagnosed with a disability, and self-help groups have developed which contribute usefully to meeting families' support needs. Planning for transition to adulthood has improved and most children aged 14 and over who have disabilities have transition plans. Clinical psychologists from CAMHS provide good advice for social workers on the difficulties that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities experience with transitions. Useful protocols to facilitate transition planning between children's and adult services are proving increasingly effective.

Enjoying and achieving

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

60. High aspirations, outstanding leadership and management, and a workforce focused on raising attainment have resulted in impressive outcomes. Information, advice and support for parents and carers are very good. Parents appreciate the help they receive to support their children's development. Schools make significant and successful efforts to involve and engage parents in their children's learning and there is innovative practice, such as after-school 'roadshows' which offer a range of fun activities promoting healthy lifestyles and advice on a wide range of issues.

61. Newham has beacon status for its early years work. EarlyStart is a universal service across the borough, demonstrating the high commitment of the council to preparing all young children well for school. A very good integrated strategy is delivered effectively and children's centres offer a wide range of services to children and families. Young children make very good progress from a low baseline, as many understand little English when they start in early years' settings. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and supported well, although a minority of parents are frustrated by delays in diagnosis that postpone the delivery of specialist help. Actions to assure the quality of childminders, including training opportunities, are improving this type of childcare. Better communication of data and of practice has improved transition to primary schools.

62. Progress in raising standards is good or better against comparators in nearly all respects. In 2005, Key Stage 4 progress was very good, with Newham placed fourth nationally for the value it adds as pupils move through Key Stages 2 to 4, and second nationally for Key Stages 3 to 4. In 2005, results at Key Stage 4 are among the most improved in the country. Council support for school improvement and self-evaluation is effective and well-received. Partnerships are strong and networking between schools is very good, with effective sharing of good practice. The council is very responsive to schools' needs and monitors the impact of support well. Prompt support is sensitive, respectful of headteachers' needs and effectively develops schools' autonomy. The proportion of schools in formal categories of concern has fallen significantly, with only one school remaining. Recruitment, retention and professional development of school-based staff are good. Well-established links with local training institutions attract teachers to the borough.

63. Newham counters underachievement very effectively and has targeted support accurately. Vulnerable and minority ethnic groups make very good progress from a low base. Refugees and asylum seekers settle very well into the borough's schools and receive outstanding support for their language, pastoral and housing needs. Initiatives to promote boys' progress, and that of some minority ethnic groups, show impressive results. Good communication and partnerships identify emerging new groups as the population changes, ensuring resources are deployed efficiently. Young carers receive good social care support but most schools have yet to address their particular needs.

64. The borough manages school attendance very successfully and has consistently improved to achieve the fourth highest attendance levels nationally in 2005. There are sufficient school places and admission arrangements are satisfactory. Rigorous procedures and effective multi-agency action ensure very good provision for children and young people who do not attend school. The pupil referral units engage those young people who have been excluded from school or who have medical or emotional difficulties very effectively. The majority of pupils gain qualifications and most make a successful transfer to post-16 provision. A high proportion of excluded pupils at Key Stage 3 are educated in alternative provision for less than one year and reintegration of excluded pupils is higher than comparators. Rates of primary exclusion are low. However, secondary permanent exclusions are marginally above comparators and increasing, partly in response to the zero tolerance of weapons in school. Pupils with statements of special educational need, White British, and Black Caribbean pupils are over-represented in exclusion figures. There is wide variation between schools in the number of fixed-term exclusions.

65. Children and young people enjoy a wide range of high-quality recreational activities and voluntary learning provision. Participation in recreational, cultural and leisure facilities has consistently increased. The council promotes maximum access and participation in leisure and sports facilities and has one of the most extensive, free community sports programmes for children and young people in the country. Impressive school holiday programmes are improving attainment.

66. Newham is at the leading edge of inclusive practice in education and there are examples of outstanding practice. Very low numbers of pupils with statements of special educational need attend special schools. Staffs' commitment to inclusive practice is very strong and the majority of parents value the support from schools. Effective multi-agency support, early identification, extensive integration with fellow students, targeted training and flexible funding mechanisms enable this group of pupils to succeed well in mainstream education. Monitoring of inclusive policies is rigorous and supported by challenge and intervention by the council. Some schools are not fully accessible for disabled children and young people, but there is a strategy to address this and to increase the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities educated within the borough. Newham has lower numbers of statements than comparators and issues a low number of new statements.

67. Support for gifted and talented pupils is strong, effectively includes hard-to-reach pupils and minority groups, and promotes high aspirations. The borough has a good range of library provision, including the award-winning Stratford and Forest Gate centres. In response to consultation with young people, a range of exciting activities has been established. Minority groups, such as looked after children and disaffected young people, have good incentives to participate in recreational activities. Looked after children and their foster families receive free leisure passes and the take-up of these continues to rise.

68. Educational outcomes for looked after children are affected by a range of challenging issues such as the limited number of foster carers in the borough, and much higher mobility than in most areas including a significant number of unaccompanied asylum seekers. Achievement and attendance have improved for looked after children though both have been variable over recent years. The number of looked after children achieving five or more GCSE passes at grades A*-C rose significantly in 2005. Of the young people leaving care at 16, 42% gained one GCSE grade A*-G or GNVQ in 2005, an improvement on the previous year. Results for looked after young people remain well below those of other young people in the authority. Support to promote attendance and attainment is very effective in some schools but there is no shared overall strategy. Educational support for looked after children is adequate. The scrutiny committee's review of the education of looked after children identified insufficient actions to support sustained improvement.

Making a positive contribution

69. The work of all local services in helping children and young people contribute to society is outstanding.

70. Very good support for personal, social and emotional development contributes well to high levels of confidence and self esteem, positive attitudes to learning and good behaviour. A wide range of initiatives, some youth service activities and effective work in schools helps children and young people forge secure and positive relationships with adults and other children. A wide range of effective support for families from statutory and voluntary agencies strengthens parenting skills and improves school attendance. Young people provide significant mentoring support to others such as during transition from primary to secondary school, and as accredited sexual health educators and peer mediators. Trained care leavers offer a befriending scheme and teenage mothers buddy with others in the 'healthy baby' initiative.

71. Children and their families, including those from vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups, receive good support to manage major challenges in their lives. Specialist teams and good provision in schools offer very good, and often outstanding support to Traveller pupils and to asylum-seeker and refugee families newly arrived in the borough. Destitute families who fall through the immigration and asylum-seeking net are supported well. Training for the Foundation Stage takes good account of transition to Key Stage 1 and includes support packages for children with learning difficulties and physical disabilities. School inspections identify good induction arrangements into secondary schools, where the vast majority of Travellers successfully transfer from Key Stages 2 to 3. Successful action, including managed moves and multi-agency support packages, prevents re-exclusion from schools. A re-integration officer is successful in helping pregnant schoolgirls and teenage mothers to continue in education, training or employment and good day-care provision is available for their children. Once identified, victims of domestic violence are well supported. Good multi-agency support and short breaks for young carers assist them to

manage personal stress. A highly successful intervention programme helps young victims of crime and bullying to recover from their ordeal and to attend school.

72. The council is resolute, proactive and highly successful in seeking and acting on the views of children and young people as key partners, including vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups. Young people participate actively in developing and performance managing strategic decisions, and in the planning and management of services. They are represented and effective on key multi-agency strategic and reference groups, and special projects and events further seek their views. However, feedback on outcomes is not yet wholly systematic. Consultation has influenced many fundamental changes such as improvements in sexual health information and provision for young parents, disabled young people and young victims of crime.

73. Newham's youth parliament is outstanding. The range and reach of its activity is highly impressive and includes holding the chief executive of the council to account for shortcomings in provision for youth. The youth service has played a significant part in taking the parliament and the youth forum forward. The parliament works very successfully in making representations to council bodies and is consulted widely, for example on the policing plan. Membership represents diversity fully. Young people trained as advocates to ensure the views of all young people shape provision represent them with integrity and tenacity. Plans are underway for a junior parliament. An active and highly influential children's rights service, financed by the council and steered by reference groups of young people, provides strong advocacy for the most vulnerable. The impact of the youth service is, however, too variable.

74. School councils are active and effective as consultative forums and the college accredits the skills of student union representatives. Most children and young people responding to a survey for this inspection feel able to have say in the way things happen in school. A higher-than-average proportion identify that it is easy to have a say in the local area. Most take part in voluntary and accredited activities to support the community. An improving cross-agency approach to records kept by the services is clear in newly designed and highly accessible looked after review forms, moving on plans and person-centred planning and review.

75. Support programmes for parents whose children are at risk of anti-social behaviour are very highly rated. The youth service also contributes through detached and outreach work. Participation in a wide range of accessible learning and recreational activities, all judiciously located in the most deprived communities, promotes positive behaviour. The effectiveness of behaviour support is rightly rated very highly by schools and strong multi-agency action empowers young people to deal with bullying.

76. Agencies use their combined resources to maximum effect in local trouble spots and safer neighbourhood teams and dedicated patrol officers raise the

profile of policing in communities. A rise in the number of assaults using weapons has led to a concerted drive with local retailers and schools to reduce possession. This has increased the number of permanent exclusions. Most children and young people surveyed feel safe in the local area around their school, and the visible presence of police is a significant factor. Very good inter-agency action prevents offending and reduces re-offending. Data are used well and there are highly effective partnerships between the YOT, the police, the voluntary sector, schools and other services. Despite a rising young population, offences have reduced over the past three years, continuing a downward trend. Youth inclusion support panels are very effective, supporting numbers far in excess of the national average. First timers in the youth justice system have decreased markedly during the past year. Although remaining lower than elsewhere, re-offending rates have risen but some interventions have proved effective. Pathways for the return of young people from custody are well mapped and school places are secured before their release.

77. Those who are looked after are supported well to make a positive contribution. Their views are widely sought, and have resulted in a befriending service, financial help on leaving care and a dedicated telephone line for ready reporting of concerns or complaints. The quality of pathway plans has improved and young people's frustrations over delays in their completion have reduced.

78. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well to make a positive contribution. Families and young people are regularly consulted on reviews of services. This has improved provision for learning and their well-being, for example through cultural and holiday activities. Disabled children and young people have ready access to appropriate professionals to discuss their concerns. A range of innovative techniques successfully enables those with severe communication difficulties to identify the support they require. The children's rights advocacy service ensures good support to raise complaints and oversees investigation. Action is being taken to address the difficulties in accessing services for parents of disabled children not receiving care packages. Once identified, good and proactive support is available from specialist teams and parenting support projects although some parents are frustrated by the need for repeated discussions with duty staff if they do not have an allocated social worker.

Achieving economic well-being

79. The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is outstanding.

80. Exceptionally widespread and well-targeted family learning programmes are improving parents' engagement with the education system and enhancing community cohesion. They provide a good basis for access to employment, training and other services. Some parents, including fathers, progressing into childcare and teacher training are increasing the provision of good-quality day-care and teaching assistance. Children of all ages benefit educationally and

socially from their parents' learning. Reading ages have risen rapidly in children whose parents participate. Teenage parents are well supported to develop personal and parenting skills. Looked after young people who are parents receive free day-care, which enables them to continue their education.

81. Services are conveniently co-located in schools and medical centres with a good range of translation services. The unique NewCred credit union run by the council effectively combats pervasive poverty by providing financial services to people who would not otherwise receive them. The innovative web-based Talking Heads helps people who cannot read to find out about services. Well-presented magazines sent to year 9 and 11 pupils and their parents explain options.

82. Improvement in achievement of all types of post-16 qualification is very rapid. The staying-on rate is high and retention is very good. Post-16 pass rates are above national averages and continue to rise. Young people have an exceptionally wide and flexible range of subjects and progression routes. Good links with higher education institutions provide collaborative training and information. An increasing number of young people progress into higher education. Participation in work based learning is very high, particularly in vocational areas aligned to regional priorities. Apprenticeship pass rates are improving and are now at the national average. Pass rates in E2E are good and rising but there are insufficient places. A wide range of work related learning projects provide accredited experiences for 14-16 year olds. Particularly successful initiatives are re-engaging disaffected young people. The many options for alternative education include specialized schemes for particularly vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. The successful employer training pilot for adults in local businesses is now extending to offer wider opportunities for young people.

83. Young people have comprehensive and good access to advice, guidance and counselling. Two Connexions personal advisers are attached to each school and eight advisors working across the borough give expert specialist advice. Close partnerships support five one-stop shops in convenient community venues. Specialist teams support minority groups with identified needs, such as Bangladeshi girls and teenage parents. Young people easily obtain support such as counselling, mentoring and out-of-hours help with their learning. However, some have difficulty obtaining benefits despite strong advocacy from the Connexions service. Youth unemployment and unknown destinations are high but have reduced significantly as a result of dedicated monitoring staff and strategies to improve data accuracy. However, information is fragmented and not easily coordinated. Most employed 16 and 17 year olds are in jobs without training.

84. Strategies for education and workforce development are highly collaborative and are supported by rigorous quality management. Many Centres of Vocational Excellence offer new progression routes through priority sectors of learning into work. Links between schools and business and between pre and

post-16 providers are strong and well established. Newham Education and Business Partnership (NEBP) and East London Business Alliance work effectively with schools to raise aspirations and teachers' business awareness. Information systems are insufficiently coordinated and data sharing between schools and colleges is inconsistent and under developed. School-based work experience is efficiently coordinated by NEBP, but this arrangement does not apply to most post-16 providers. Learners sometimes have difficulty gaining a placement. Some particularly innovative projects will require sustainable funding to continue.

85. An energetic vision for sustainable community regeneration includes a clear picture of employment requirements for the next 10 years. Focused plans to exploit major opportunities for growth to develop sustainable employment and training are matched to vigorous community development. A council partnership has developed a comprehensive and effective programme which helps many families to combat poverty and maximise household income. Regeneration initiatives attract many new businesses. New transport links encourage investment from the City of London. Innovative college initiatives extend opportunities. Schools benefit from new building and accredited leisure activities. Targeted projects are building capacity in the voluntary sector to support community regeneration.

86. Well-developed plans to improve living conditions include clearly articulated requirements for suitable family housing. The first phase of building 50,000 new homes and refurbishment of poor existing stock is developing new mixed communities and reviving run-down areas. Short-term housing for young people, including care leavers, is satisfactory, with priority for the most vulnerable. Increased links with providers ensure that care leavers with rent arrears are not evicted and can access secure council tenancies. They have also resulted in contracts with approved agencies for young people. Homeless 16-17 year olds are fast tracked through interim accommodation into a range of supported housing, and receive support through mediation, financial advice, and skills development. However, there remains a shortage of suitable long-term accommodation for young people, particularly those not in the most vulnerable groups. The borough's development of new homes is expected to help in addressing this shortage. Long hostel stays were a problem two years ago but are now confined to temporary emergency use. Early intervention by Relate mediators helps to reduce young people's risk of homelessness.

87. Satisfactory systems are established for children leaving care. Clearly documented working procedures support transition planning which has improved and is satisfactory. All looked after children have a funded NewCred savings account and access to financial advice. Fewer looked after young people participate in economic activity than others in their age group, but action by the council and its partners is resulting in rising numbers. Increased links with housing ensure that there are no evictions.

88. Good arrangements and a wide range of well-designed provision promote the independence of young people with disabilities. Satisfactory accommodation is available for young disabled adults, including care leavers. The specialist school supporting those with severe disability up to the age of 19 has developed innovative learner-centred transition packs. Newham College has a variety of customised programmes with good progression routes into employment and further training. NewVic College has a well-resourced specialist unit for young people with learning disabilities. Retention and achievement are good on all programmes. Adaptations are available for physical disability though sometimes slow to arrive. A successful partnership project with the voluntary sector has improved the take-up of benefits by disabled people. This has also improved communication between claimants, the job centre and the benefits office. Locating specialist support services in GP surgeries has successfully released additional doctor time. However, only 12 young people are receiving direct payments and many are not aware that this financial support is available.

Service management

89. The management of services for children and young people and the capacity to improve further are good.

90. The council's self assessment accurately reflects strengths and areas for development in most areas, although weaknesses in the youth service and social care are not sufficiently recognised. Some areas, for example inclusive practice, education achievement and seeking the views of young people are exemplary and could have been given greater prominence.

91. The ambition of the council and its partners are excellent. There are extremely strong, long-term and challenging ambitions for children and young people and a corporate commitment from all agencies to improve outcomes and deliver improvements. Ambitions are based on a thorough understanding of the complex and changing needs of the area. There are broad-ranging and detailed data on issues facing children and young people.

92. The draft CYPP is a robust document developed after extensive consultation with all partners. There are clear links between the community strategy, the corporate plan, the council's delivery plan and the draft CYPP. There is a strong focus throughout all these plans on meeting the diverse needs of children and young people. The council is working well towards establishing a children's trust. There is a clear framework for developing interagency governance arrangements. Appropriate plans are in place to trial the CAF. There is a clear approach to information sharing and workforce planning. Stability of services during the period of transition has been an important focus for senior managers and has been effectively managed.

93. Prioritisation on meeting the needs of children and young people is good. Many, but not all services and outcomes are improving in line with priorities. There is a shared understanding of desired outcomes and clear understanding

of changing and emerging needs. Partners are clear about their respective responsibilities. The council is significantly reducing the funding spending share (FSS) financial gap for education and has targeted funding to EarlyStart to meet its corporate priorities.

94. Over £12 million is currently located in aligned budgets and there is a clear desire to agree pooled budgets in 2006-07 in discussions on a local area agreement. However there is an inconsistent approach to aligning budgets with priorities in some services, and to using risk management to improve service delivery. The management of school balances is inadequate.

95. Overall, services provide good value for money and there is a strong strategic commitment by the Mayor and senior managers to provide value for money. The council achieves good outcomes for children and young people, and education provides good value for money with funding levels below similar areas, relatively high spend compared with similar councils, and high levels of deprivation are taken into account. Value for money in social care is adequate. Cost per child looked after by the council and unit costs of residential care are high, stability of placements is good, and educational outcomes for looked after children are adequate. Prioritisation and quality assurance in the youth service, and, therefore, value for money processes, are inadequate.

96. The capacity of the council is good. Capacity continues to expand through strong partnership working with a wide range of statutory, business, community and voluntary sector partnerships. Contracts or grants have been agreed with over 200 groups in 2005-06. The inter-agency partnership is improving the outcomes for children and young people.

97. Newham's approach to inclusion is excellent and longstanding, and its success is manifested by good outcomes for children and young people.

98. Capacity is used effectively in the YOT and the council has a mature and productive relationship with schools. There have been successful initiatives to recruit and retain high quality staff able to drive the new agenda and there is a strong focus on staff training and development.

99. Commissioning of services is adequate. There are corporate plans to improve commissioning across the council. The children and young people's service is beginning to use value for money indicators as a way of improving service delivery. Best Value Reviews have led to real service improvement. The overview and scrutiny committee has looked at a number of areas but its impact is limited by its focus on operational rather than strategic recommendations.

100. Capacity to improve is good. Members and officers provide excellent strategic and operational leadership and are clear about their different roles and responsibilities and how they can best drive improvement in Newham. The council is in a sound financial position. There has been a strong track record of delivering educational improvement to diverse and vulnerable groups and there

is every confidence that innovative and robust approaches can now be applied across the whole of children and young people's services. There is a strong commitment to the rebuild of secondary schools through Building Schools for the Future. The rebuilding of all primary schools is an appropriate priority for the future.

101. Performance management is adequate. Targets have been set in the draft CYPP which are achievable and mainly challenging. However not all targets in all plans are sufficiently sharp or focused on better outcomes for young people, and not all services have formal agreements on quality standards. Data collection and its use are good in education, as is action planning. Monitoring delivery against agreed outcomes is adequate in social care. Case and file management in social care needs to improve. Performance management is inadequate in the youth service, and there is an overemphasis on operational rather than strategic issues. The council is working to embed performance management systems across the organisation. Services are regularly monitored and the responsible cabinet member is actively involved in monitoring performance. The council has an excellent, proactive and innovative approach to seeking the views of children and young people to help improve services.

Annex: The Children and young people section of the corporate assessment report

1. Overall, the Council is performing well to meet the needs of children and young people, with a range of outstanding features which are all the more commendable in an area of high deprivation. Social care is adequate. The Youth Service makes an adequate contribution to outcomes in a number of areas, with some good examples, but the overall service is judged inadequate.

2. There are long-term and challenging ambitions for young people with a strong commitment from all agencies to improve outcomes for them. The draft Children and Young People's Plan is a robust document with clear links to the community strategy, the corporate plan, and the council's delivery plan. Planning throughout is based on the five Every Child Matters outcomes. There is a strong focus to meeting the diverse needs within Newham. Plans and ambitions are based on a thorough understanding of the complex and changing needs of the area, supported by broad-ranging and detailed data. The council established an integrated children's service in 2005, and the new structure was implemented in January 2006.

3. The Council and its partners have achieved adequate and improving health outcomes for children and young people overall. Children's lifestyles are improving with their involvement in physical activities and healthier eating, and parents are encouraged and enabled to support these developments. More mothers are breastfeeding, and there are reductions in both smoking among young people and the rate of teenage pregnancies. The number of low birth weight babies and high infant mortality rates are of concern but a sound strategy is now in place to help address inequalities and differential mortality rates across the borough. Oral health is poor but a clear oral health strategy is in place which is beginning to improve access to dental care. Agencies are collaborating effectively to improve immunisation rates and to tackle obesity. There is good inter-agency work to promote the mental health for children and young people, although some young people with acute mental health needs have to wait too long for treatment services following assessment.

4. On the basis of the evidence gathered, children appear safe. There are effective strategies to reduce domestic violence, bullying, and anti-social behaviour. The police work well with schools to reduce the incidence and the fear of crime. There has been investment in family support services and the number of looked after children has stabilised in line with comparators. The area child protection committee is effective. There are high numbers on the child protection register, but very few in the category of sexual abuse. The threshold to access social care services is high, and the council's response to some referrals is inadequate.

5. The contribution of local services to helping children and young people achieve well and to enjoy their education and recreation is outstanding. An EarlyStart programme across the borough is effective in preparing children for school. Newham counters underachievement well and progress in raising standards is good or better against comparators in nearly all respects. Attendance is managed well, and support for schools is valued and effective. GCSE results are higher than comparators and in line with national averages. Newham is at the leading edge of inclusive practice in education. Access to, and participation in leisure and sports activity is high and Newham has one of the most extensive, free community sports programmes in the country.

6. The work of the Council and its partners to help children and young people contribute to society is outstanding. Very good support for personal, social, and emotional development contributes to positive attitudes to learning and behaviour. Children and families, including those from vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups, receive good support to manage changes in their lives. Young people take their responsibilities as community members very seriously, with some outstanding contributions to voluntary activities. There is a wide range of opportunities to enable children and young people to make decisions about, and changes to, services. Many take part in these and the work of the youth parliament is outstanding. Almost all young people feel safe and happy at school and say their views make a difference to what happens. The number of offences committed by young people has reduced substantially and re-offending rates remain lower than comparators.

7. The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people to achieve economic well-being is outstanding. Staying-on and retention rates are very good and educational outcomes for young people have risen sharply and are above national averages. Young people, including those with disabilities, have an unusually broad and expanding range of opportunities to participate in learning. Participation in work based learning is exceptionally high. An energetic vision for sustainable community regeneration sets ambitious targets supported by innovative projects to improve families' economic well-being. Youth unemployment, particularly among care leavers, is high but reducing. Young people are fast-tracked to accommodation, and care leavers are offered a range of tenancies, including the provision of secure council tenancies, but there remains a shortage of suitable long-term housing for young people.