

Joint area review

Liverpool Children's Services Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

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

1. This report assesses the contribution of local services in ensuring that children and young people:
 - at risk or requiring safeguarding are effectively cared for
 - who are looked after achieve the best possible outcomes
 - with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve the best possible outcomes.
2. The following investigation was also carried out:
 - the impact of developments in 14–19 education and training on outcomes for young people.

Context

3. Liverpool is one of the most challenging urban environments in the country. It ranks first out of 384 in England on the Index of Multiple Deprivation, with almost 60% of its neighbourhoods within the most deprived 10% nationally, and 23% of its Super Output Areas in the worst 1% nationally. 81% of the total spending of the authority is funded from government grants – the second highest in England. There are just over 92,380 children and young people in Liverpool (aged 0–17); 1,657 have a statement of special educational need and 878 are in public care. 31.4% of children are eligible for free school meals.
4. Liverpool's children experience poorer health than in many other parts of the UK. One third of 10-year-old children in the city are overweight and half have experienced dental cavities by the age of 5.
5. Liverpool provides 41% of all jobs in the seaboard city region of 2 million people. Within the Liverpool city region, the current employment level is 68%, and within the Liverpool local authority area it is 62%. There are significant spatial concentrations of unemployment and disadvantage. Unemployment levels are much higher than the national figure and in some wards over half of the adult population does not work.
6. Liverpool is experiencing economic growth and regeneration. This has been influenced by a number of central government funding initiatives, such as Objective One, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the New Deal programme, together with employer engagement activities, such as the South Sefton/North Liverpool Local Economic Growth Initiative (LEGI). Liverpool is also part of the Spearhead Group, comprising local authorities in which health inequalities are particularly challenging. The city will be the European Capital of

Culture in 2008, and this is providing commercial, social and cultural development opportunities.

7. Since 2003, the city's population has increased; in 2005 it stood at 447,500, representing close to a 1% increase on the previous year. Residents from minority ethnic communities account for approximately 10.9% of Liverpool's population. Liverpool has a diverse ethnic population, with increasing numbers of asylum seekers entering the city since the opening of the Border and Immigration Agency Asylum (North West), Asylum Screening Unit in 2000. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children provide a significant challenge to health, social care and accommodation resources, and the number of these children in Liverpool has grown from 15 between 2000 and 2002 to in excess of 320 currently. In addition, asylum-seeking families provide a further 400 children who attend Liverpool schools and the community college; this too provides a significant challenge to schools. Pupils from minority ethnic groups comprise 13.2% of the school population. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language is 6.1%.

8. Children's social care services are provided through 341 foster carers, three family centres, two children's residential care homes, a secure unit and 25 social work teams. At the time of the inspection, there were 339 children and young people on the child protection register. Liverpool City Council also runs a secure care home, with 18 beds and short-break residential provision for disabled children. There are separate teams for reviewing and quality assurance, and safeguarding; and the Careline service provides the front door for adults' and children's social care. There are also three commissioners for children, who commission services jointly with Liverpool Primary Care Trust (PCT).

9. The council maintains five nursery schools, 134 primary, infant and junior schools, 28 secondary schools, all with sixth forms, 12 special schools and a pupil referral unit. In addition, 21 children's centres have also been established and there are three City Academies.

10. There are no young offender institutions in the area. Services to children and young people who are at risk of offending or who have offended are provided through Liverpool's youth offending service.

11. Greater Merseyside Learning and Skills Council works closely with Liverpool City Council, Connexions, Liverpool Community College, training providers and schools in addressing the 14 to 19 strategy. Post-16 education is provided by one general further education college, with various sites across the city, 28 school sixth forms, two Academy sixth forms and 11 work-based training providers. Entry to Employment (E2E) provision is managed and coordinated by the Learning and Skills Council and delivered by a local consortium of eight training providers offering 1,048 places. Adult and community learning, including family learning, is provided by the council in partnership with other providers, including the voluntary sector.

12. Liverpool Primary Care Trust provides primary care for children in Liverpool. The Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen Hospitals NHS Trust, the Royal Liverpool Children's NHS Trust and the Liverpool Women's Hospital NHS Trust are the main providers of acute health services locally. MerseyCare NHS Trust provides Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for children and young people in Liverpool. NHS North West Strategic Health Authority covers NHS organisations in the Liverpool area.

Main findings

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

- The management of services for children and young people is good. Effective leadership, a strong commitment from officers and members, and good partnership working are improving the achievement and well-being of children and young people in Liverpool. There is a strong track record of improvement in key priority areas, and good management and workforce capacity to bring about further improvement. However, sustainability is uncertain because of council-wide financial difficulties. These are reducing the level of confidence in the overall capacity of the council to build on its previous good work for children and young people. Capacity to improve is therefore adequate.
- Strong leadership in children's social care and good multi-agency partnerships are bringing about improved service provision and good outcomes for children and young people at risk or requiring safeguarding. No privately fostered children have been identified, although action is being taken to address this.
- Provision to meet the health, education and training needs of looked after children is good, and they have good opportunities to participate in decision making. Absence from school, particularly by looked after children who are placed with their parents, is too high.
- Local services make a good contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities through strong partnership working between health, education, social care and voluntary organisations.
- The 14–19 Learning Partnership provides effective strategic leadership and direction, and the impact of developments in 14–19 education and training on outcomes for young people is good.

Grades

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

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

Recommendations

For immediate action

The local partnership should:

- ensure that an appropriate way is found to successfully disseminate the findings of this report to children and young people in the area
- identify privately fostered children and young people.

The council should:

- improve its financial position overall so that services for children and young people are made secure for the future
- ensure that forward financial planning is systematically applied to all projects and their associated planning processes.

For action over the next six months

The local partnership should:

- improve performance management arrangements by:
 - ensuring that all service delivery plans have clear targets and timescales
 - developing quality assurance in social care, with involvement of all operational managers.
- improve the attendance of looked after children and those with a statement of educational need in mainstream schools

- improve the engagement of agencies in implementing the Common Assessment Framework through better understanding of the key worker role
- ensure that support is available to improve the outcomes of looked after children who are placed with their parents.

For action in the longer term

The local partnership should:

- increase availability of suitable long-term tenancies to meet the needs of the care leaver population
- increase capacity and reduce waiting lists within the Speech and Language Therapy Unit.

Equality and diversity

14. The local authority and its partners are effective in identifying diverse and vulnerable groups, and are working with them to improve equality of access and outcomes. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) was based on an audit of needs across the city, with targeted audits of children from black and minority ethnic and vulnerable groups. The CYPP has a strong focus on inclusion and tackling disadvantage. Specialist services have been developed that are dedicated to the health needs of black and minority ethnic groups, travellers, asylum seekers and refugees. The number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children has increased significantly, and there are good arrangements for assessing and providing for their needs. Outcomes for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people aged 16–18 are good, with most engaged in education and employment. Educational outcomes for most children from black and minority ethnic groups are generally satisfactory and sometimes better. Where low achievement has been identified, interventions are in place to engage community leaders and support parents and children to make better progress. The very effective drive for inclusion in schools, developed through school networks and outreach provision, has resulted in a significant reduction in exclusions and has been a major success. The incidence of permanent and fixed term exclusions is well below the national average. Children's services prepare equality impact assessments in order to identify and plan for improvement.

Safeguarding

Inadequate



Adequate



Good

Outstanding



15. The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people at risk or requiring safeguarding is good.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Effective leadership in children's social care is achieving rapidly improving performance.</p> <p>Strong multi-agency partnerships at strategic and service delivery level, including a well-established Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).</p> <p>Effective multi-agency work to clarify thresholds for services to meet different levels of need.</p> <p>Strong voluntary sector that is working effectively with statutory agencies.</p> <p>Strong multi-agency commitment to safeguarding children in the community and imaginative initiatives to prevent involvement in violent crime and gangs.</p> <p>High-quality service to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people.</p>	<p>Reluctance of some agencies to implement the Common Assessment Framework.</p> <p>No privately fostered children identified in Liverpool.</p> <p>Underdeveloped quality assurance systems.</p>

16. Children and young people and their carers are informed about key risks to their safety and how to deal with them. Outcomes in this area are good. Liverpool has made good progress in reducing the incidence of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents, with a reduction of 30% since 2005. Interventions are targeted at the areas with highest levels of casualties. Parents and carers value advice given on keeping their children safe through a wide range of multi-agency initiatives in schools and children's centres. The majority of young people report that they feel safe in the city.

17. There is a strong multi-agency commitment to safeguard children in the community, and the majority of children are provided with a safe environment. The council and its partners are actively promoting safety on the streets through a range of initiatives and targeted support. Operation Stay Safe reinforces parental responsibility for children out on the streets at night. The police work closely with schools to help prevent involvement in anti-social behaviour and crime, including a targeted project with the youth service to address racially aggravated offences. An anti-gun education programme is targeted on 15 primary schools in Croxteth and Norris Green. The It's Not OK

programme in schools includes education on risks from bullying, race hate, alcohol, fire and gun crime. Youth service provision was judged to be good in the recent inspection, citing fruitful links with key statutory agencies. The youth offending service is engaged in good multi-agency work to help prevent young people offending and to engage them with a range of voluntary programmes. All schools operate anti-bullying strategies, and most young people feel safe from bullying. A high-profile, multi-agency initiative to prevent, identify and respond to children living with domestic abuse has been launched by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). This has increased the number of children who are safeguarded from domestic abuse.

18. Children are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles; tackling obesity and encouraging physical activity are key priorities in the CYPP. Young people have access to a good range of physical activity, including free access to leisure centres. Teenage parents are well supported in schools. Early intervention services are provided by CAMHS across the city, and feedback from parents, children and young people is positive. There is effective collaboration to prevent sexual exploitation of young people. There is good liaison between midwives and social care regarding expectant mothers who misuse substances. A voluntary sector project provides support to mothers who abuse alcohol. The Drug Dependency Unit links well with other services and attends child protection conferences where appropriate.

19. Outcomes for children and young people requiring safeguarding are good, and most indicators show improvement. The number of referrals has increased from 476 in 2005/06 to 556 in 2006/07, and the number of core assessments has increased from 17.3 in 2005/06 to 72.9 in 2006/07 per 10,000 of the population. Both levels are now close to similar areas of high deprivation. Good progress has been made on the re-registration rate for children on the child protection register, which has reduced from 18.7% in 2005/06 to 11.5% in 2006/07. There is good liaison between the key statutory agencies.

20. The contribution of each service to family support is well understood, and inter-agency policies and procedures are consistently implemented. Careline provides a consistent response to referrals from all sources and is well regarded by other agencies. Effective multi-agency work has enabled thresholds for early intervention, and assessment and referral to social care to be defined so that resources are well matched with needs. Extensive multi-agency training has been provided on the Common Assessment Framework, although implementation has been hindered by agencies' reluctance to take on the key worker role. The council has created dedicated posts to resolve this. Commissioning arrangements have been strengthened to include measurable outcomes. Young carers receive excellent guidance and support through the voluntary sector. Links between the youth offending service and social care have been less effective, but are improving.

21. There is good compliance with referral, assessment, planning and review arrangements; although where more than one child in a family is registered, family files and family child protection plans give insufficient clarity about the needs of each child. Parents are involved in child protection conferences and their views are routinely sought. Criminal records checks and other staff vetting procedures are in place and meet statutory requirements. Effective Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements and multi-agency risk assessment conference arrangements are in place. However, recent publicity to enable the identification of privately fostered children has been unsuccessful, and at present no privately fostered children have been identified. This is being addressed through the LSCB, which is refocusing its publicity and is also investigating the over-representation of children from black and ethnic minority communities on the child protection register.

22. The LSCB is an effective partnership, with strong commitment from a wide range of partner agencies. Policies, procedures and practice guidance are well presented, clear and up to date. Each agency has a good understanding of its responsibilities and accountabilities, and designated staff are well supported. Publicity materials on recognising and raising welfare and safeguarding concerns for children in the community are clear, accessible and in a range of local languages. Information sharing between agencies is effective, with Liverpool being an early adopter of Contact Point. The breadth and reach of safeguarding training is improving, and a training coordinator has recently been appointed. Some adult services staff across social care have not yet received child protection training. All children on the child protection register are allocated to a qualified key worker.

23. The council has successfully recruited to fill the previously high level of social worker vacancies. There are now few vacancies and retention measures are in place. Children's social care is well led at senior management level. Social care has a stable group of team managers who are enabling consistently good services to children on the child protection register. Quality assurance is developing through the Safeguarding Children Unit, but is not yet comprehensive and does not involve all operational managers. The Safeguarding Team provides valued advice to other agencies and audits social care case files for compliance with procedures. Effective multi-agency work has improved the safety of children in licensed premises, employment and entertainment settings. Safeguarding guidance has been provided for private and voluntary agencies. A participation worker has been appointed to further improve levels of participation for children and young people in their plans and reviews. A more family friendly setting for conferences and reviews is being commissioned. Learning from case reviews is facilitated by the Safeguarding Team.

24. Services to establish the identity and whereabouts of all children are adequate, although there is no overall strategy or lead for this area. There are good arrangements for tracking children missing from education and good cooperation arrangements across authority boundaries. Children not educated

at school are closely monitored. A voluntary sector project for children missing from care works closely with the police and provides debriefing and support for children who are found. Two dedicated police officers for children missing from home link with the council's Investigation and Support Team. Homeless families are notified to health visitors when they move in and out of hostels. Asylum-seeking families and traveller families not on permanent sites provide particular challenges with regard to tracking children. There are very good arrangements for assessing and providing for the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people, with a dedicated social work team working closely with the Home Office and high-quality accommodation and support for young people over 16. Outcomes for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people aged 16–18 are good, with most engaged in education and employment.

Looked after children and young people



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Positive health outcomes and support.</p> <p>Good family support services.</p> <p>Strong praise by children and young people for social workers, carers and residential workers.</p> <p>Good educational support through the Looked After Children's Education Support (LACES) Team, resulting in improving educational achievement.</p> <p>Good care leaving services and engagement of care leavers in education, employment and training.</p> <p>Free access to sport and leisure activities.</p> <p>An excellent Participation Group.</p> <p>Effective support by the youth offending service in residential establishments and foster placements.</p>	<p>Poorer outcomes overall for children placed with parents than for looked after children in residential and foster placements.</p> <p>School attendance of looked after children cared for by family is lower than for other looked after children.</p> <p>Lack of availability of long-term tenancies for care leavers.</p>

26. There is effective work to improve the health outcomes for looked after children, coordinated by a multi-agency Looked After Children's Health Team. Performance in ensuring that annual health assessments are completed for this group of children is now very good. There is also a wide range of CAMHS, responding promptly to need, supporting carers and residential children's homes, and providing direct work for children in crisis situations. A health development worker ensures a clear focus on improving the general health of this group, including supporting a peer information network amongst carers and advising the residential homes. Children and young people report that they feel their health needs are well met, although older teenagers report difficulties in accessing dental treatment.

27. Safeguarding outcomes for looked after children are good and most live in safe environments. Decisions to accommodate children are taken by principal officers, but decisions are scrutinised by senior managers, and timely and effective reviews ensure that children are not accommodated unnecessarily. There are 878 looked after children in Liverpool, 92.9 per 10,000 of the population, compared with 82.7 for statistical neighbours. The high numbers are mainly due to the high levels of unaccompanied asylum seekers and looked after children placed at home with parents under Children Act 1989 regulations. All have an allocated social worker. Case tracking identified good work by children's social care, with staff committed to improving children's life chances. Reviews are mainly held on time. The stability of placements for looked after children is generally good. Work to further improve stability for children looked after for three years or more is already delivering improvements. Good family support services are in place, with Liverpool piloting the new Public Law Outline to ensure that children and their families are assessed and provided with suitable services in order to prevent the need for the commencement of any court proceedings.

28. Recent regulatory inspections have judged the adoption service to be good. However, although much good practice was identified, the local council fostering service was judged to be inadequate in 20. due to weaknesses in recording in staff recruitment, sleeping arrangements for one child, and inconsistency of information supplied to carers. The local council responded to these issues promptly and is delivering on an action plan to address them.

29. Over a fifth of the children looked after are placed either with their own parents or with family and friend carers. Outcomes, particularly school attendance and educational attainment for those placed with family and friends, are lower than for the majority of children in care. The council has put additional support in place to address this. Looked after children report positively about their experience of care, and praise social workers, carers and residential workers for making a positive difference to their lives.

30. The Looked After Children Education Support (LACES) Team works well to improve achievement, for example by targeting the poorest attenders, helping the transition from primary to secondary schools and providing good training

for carers and support workers. This has brought about significant improvement in the primary sector, where the attendance of looked after children is now higher than that of similar councils. However, attendance by looked after children in secondary schools has remained a concern and is a priority for improvement. Although the overall absence figure fell from 20.2% to 19.4% in 2007, it was still higher than the national average of 13.3%.

31. Support to improve achievement outcomes is good, increasingly coherent and well targeted to continue to reduce the gap between the achievements of looked after children and those of all children in the city. Attainment at the end of each key stage in 2007 improved on the targets set. In 2006/07, 16.4% of young people leaving care aged 16 or over achieved five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*–C, a significant improvement on the previous year. Results exceeded the 12% target, which had been based on prior attainment, and were higher than the national average of 9.8% and those of statistical neighbours for this group. The percentage of young people leaving care attaining one or more GCSEs (grades A*–G) has been subject to year-on-year fluctuation and was slightly below the national average in 2006/07 following two years of good performance. There is an effective and comprehensive approach to inclusion through negotiated transfers and provision of additional support, and schools do not exclude looked after children and young people.

32. Care leaving services are good. Well focused support ensures that a consistently higher proportion are being engaged in employment, education or training at the age of 19 than is the case nationally. There are traineeships within the council and also with private industries in the city. A multi-disciplinary team of social care staff, Connexions workers and health staff ensure good quality support, which is praised by care leavers, with 93% –including those living outside the city – choosing to continue to receive this support. Free leisure passes, available for all children in Liverpool, are taken up by 50% of this group. However, although short-term accommodation is available, there are insufficient suitable long-term tenancies to meet the needs of the leaving care population.

33. There is a good range of participation activities to enable individual children to contribute to decisions being made about their lives, including consultation on bullying and on the CYPP, and an excellent Children's Participation Group which supports children new to care. The group has written a guide for looked after children, and participated in the recruitment of foster carers. The participation opportunities have increased the confidence and skills of young people involved in those activities and are highly regarded by those who have been involved. Achievements are celebrated through high-profile events, with the enthusiastic involvement of councillors. The Corporate Parenting Group involves young people by invitation. The council has appointed to a post to lead on developing a set of standards and greater consistency in consultation work across the council. There are good independent advocates for looked after children, provided through a contract with the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) and this service is well known and used by children.

There are good interventions with looked after children by the youth offending service to help them avoid offending, for example through work in residential establishments and foster placements, which has resulted in a significant reduction in offending.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



34. The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Effective partnership working, including health, education, social care and voluntary organisations.</p> <p>Development of multi-agency Person Centred Plans supported by the Team Around the Child Team.</p> <p>Early detection and intervention for pre-school children from the Neighbourhood Early Years Team.</p> <p>Inclusive practice to ensure continuity of education and reduce exclusions from school.</p> <p>Good play and leisure opportunities through Fusion and Splice.</p>	<p>Long waiting times for Speech and Language Therapy services.</p> <p>Low attendance of some children and young people with a statement of special educational need in mainstream schools.</p>

35. The local authority is working well with partners to meet the needs and improve the outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good partnerships between council services and voluntary sector providers promote the development of good quality services. Educational outcomes are good, and pupils with special educational needs make good progress in school. The inclusive approach by the council continues to drive the good development of services, highlighted as a strength in the 2006 annual performance assessment.

36. Safeguarding of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is evident throughout the provision of services, and safeguarding outcomes are good. Staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding, child protection and manual handling. Safeguarding advice is provided by the Children's Disability Team, using the same process as for children without learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children in need plans are in place and are regularly reviewed. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities reported that they felt safe in their environments. There is an advocacy service for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to help them express their views and concerns.

37. The council works well in partnership with health organisations, and joint commissioning supports services in meeting the health needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For example, early referral and intervention for newly discharged babies from the local Neonatal Unit to the Neighbourhood Early Years Service Team is excellent and ensures that the needs of mothers and babies are met by a care package provided by a range of services. The theme of early detection and intervention is promoted by children's centres across the city. The Team Around the Child (TAC) training facility has provided extensive professional development to all multi-agency key workers in the promotion of basic skills and in supporting those with learning and behaviour, emotional, speech and language difficulties. The proactive work within the multi-agency workforce helps to build basic language enrichment skills. However, there are long waiting times for Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) services, with over 200 children waiting for access to these services for up to two years. The council is aware of the situation, and additional capacity has been created in children's centres and by the creation of two additional SALT posts from April 2008; the impact of this is yet to be seen.

38. The TAC multi-agency approach to Person Centred Plans has led to good outcomes for pre-school children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In particular, the CAMHS Team has reported no referrals for under fives, indicating that early detection and care intervention by the TAC key workers is proving to be effective. Continuing support by the Neighbourhood Early Years Service Team ensures a smooth transition from nursery to primary school. The Person Centred Plans include multi-agency involvement and help to ensure that appropriate input and support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and with statements of educational need are effectively delivered to schools.

39. Educational attainments for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have improved steadily over the last four years. This is most marked for children and young people requiring 'school action'. For example, Level 5 results at Key Stage 3 improved by at least 20% in each core subject between 2003 and 2007. Pupils' performance across all levels at GCSE shows a similarly improving trend over recent years, in particular the 'school action' improvements have risen by 13% in A*-C grades achieved at GCSE from 2004-07. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational

need is reducing, and is below the percentage for similar authorities and the national average. This clearly reflects the authority's inclusive practices and effective early intervention within the school setting. Where statements are issued, the process is timely and effective. However, the attendance rate of some pupils with a statement of special educational need is too low. Attendance data, school and individual attendance performance is being closely analysed to inform further action.

40. The practice of including children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in mainstream education is a notable strength. A consequence of this is the low proportion of pupils with statements excluded from school. This is most marked at the secondary phase, with recent figures showing only 9.7% excluded, compared to figures of similar authorities and nationally of 22.2% and 28.7% respectively. Effective dialogue between relevant professionals supports the TAC approach and enables good, tiered support to meet the differing needs of children and young people. This may include negotiated transfers from school to school, resourced provision in mainstream schools or support centre inclusion prior to a return to school or workplace. Effective outreach support is provided by special school staff and specialists working in schools and children's centres.

41. The use of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme, together with other behavioural support initiatives, is increasing significantly. Early indications are that these are having a positive impact in significantly reducing the number of school referrals for additional support. For instance, the number of pupils referred for behavioural difficulties has reduced by half in schools where the SEAL programme has been embedded.

42. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good opportunities to make a positive contribution. For example, the council has undertaken several consultations with children and their families/carers during the recent re-configuration of residential care in a special school. Feedback from parents celebrates the good alternative arrangements provided by the council. These include the Fusion and Splice projects, which have improved inclusion in community activities by enabling partners, youth centres and voluntary agencies to develop skills and training to support children and young people. Participation by young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in schools and the Youth Parliament is also good. Meetings regularly include reference to learning and disability matters as part of a review of the CYPP. Representation from special schools is an integral part of the consultative process, well supported by the increasingly coordinated work of the Disability Advisory Council, pupil advocacy, the Participation Unit and with council and voluntary youth services.

43. Good multi-agency partnerships work well to ensure that the transition between different school phases is successful for each child and young person with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The authority has arrangements to monitor, track and record appropriate multi-agency transition plans for young

people moving to adult services. The number of completed transition plans in 2006/07 improved on previous years, but remained below national figures. In response, the council has evaluated its reporting procedures to ensure full compliance for young people having a Transitional Lifestyle Plan and/or a Person Centred Plan. Opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to access employment, education or training are good. Personal advisors from Connexions offer good support to help young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities develop individual career pathways. The employment, education and training rate for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has risen from 66.0% to 72.5%.

Other issues identified for further investigation

Investigation into the impact of developments in 14–19 education and training on outcomes for young people

44. **The impact of developments in 14–19 education and training on outcomes for young people is good.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Effective leadership and management of successful partnership working to support the 14–19 strategy.</p> <p>Post-16 collaboration has improved the mobility of young people and enhanced recruitment and achievement rates significantly.</p> <p>An effective Increased Flexibility Programme providing good outcomes, especially for vulnerable young people aged 14–16.</p> <p>Effective support for new arrivals by the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Attainment Service (EMTAS).</p>	<p>Although reducing, there are high numbers of young people leaving education and training at age 17 and 18.</p>

45. The 14–19 Learning Partnership provides effective strategic leadership and direction for the development of 14–19 provision. Working groups are in place to effectively manage and implement a strategy for the curriculum, and provide information, advice and guidance. A Vulnerable Learners' Group has quickly established priorities based on a good analysis of needs and performance data. School consortia or 'collaboratives' have been well established, improving the quality of 16–19 education, training and collaboration between schools, the further education college and work-based learning providers. Post-16 provision, underpinned by the Learners Entitlement, has broadened the curriculum, increased the mobility of young people, and raised rates of recruitment and

attainment significantly to enable the partnership to meet the government's September Guarantee of a place in learning for all young people at the end of Year 11. Good action plans are in place in most collaboratives to take the work forward, although a few do not set specific, time-limited targets.

46. Progress in collaborative activity for the 14–16 age group is at an early stage and developing well. The evolving 'super collaboratives', or area partnerships, form an appropriate response to tackling the wider remit of 14–19 provision. They build on existing partnership activity and successful submissions for vocational diploma schemes. Agreement has been reached between partners to introduce a common application form and common timetable approach to accommodate the vocational curriculum at Key Stage 4 and for elements of post-16 provision. Good foundations are in place, but it is too early to discern the impact of the new arrangements on outcomes for young people.

47. Good collaborative working between individual schools and the college underpins the ongoing improvement of achievement at 14–16. The proportion of young people gaining five or more A*–C grades at GCSE has risen significantly from 40.2% in 2002 to 55.3% in 2006. The average point score at GCSE is now in line with that of statistical neighbours. Unvalidated data for 2007 show a further rise to 61.3% and have closed the gap to within 2% of the national average.

48. The proportion of young people gaining five A*–C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics was 36.7% in 2006, higher than that of similar areas of high deprivation. Unvalidated data for 2007, at 40.5%, show a significant increase of 3.8% over the previous year and a faster rate of improvement than is the case nationally.

49. Attendance in secondary schools has improved and was in line with that of statistical neighbours in 2006. At 90.3% it was below the national average of 92.1%, although both authorised and unauthorised absence has fallen since 2004. The authority has identified that Key Stage 4 pupils contribute disproportionately to unauthorised absence. A range of strategies, based on good analysis of data and need, are being implemented to tackle attendance issues. For example, nine of the eleven schools with a community police officer attached have improved both attendance and attainment. The new Behaviour and Attendance Forum, which includes agencies and services from across the city, is a model of good practice.

50. Most vulnerable young people in the 14 to 19 age range make at least satisfactory progress in meeting their targets, although their attainment in tests and examinations is below the average of most young people in the city. The partnership has identified raising attainment of the most vulnerable as a key priority, and has put good quality support in place. For example, the partnership has given particular attention to improve the low attainment of young people from the small Somali and Yemeni communities. The Ethnic Minority and Traveller Education Service (EMTAS) effectively supports young

people newly arrived in the country, and provides a programme of activities to which the youth service, social care services, the further education college and the voluntary sector contribute. The curriculum and support for young people at risk of disengaging from learning at Key Stage 4 and for those permanently excluded is good, with access to 25 hours of learning each week. Good provision is available for all permanently excluded young people within the statutory timeframe. The Alternative Education Team effectively provides and monitors a range of programmes for over 250 young people, including participation in college and work-based learning provision. All programmes ensure a good range of basic skills provision and appropriate accreditation. These programmes are highly effective, and engage some of the most vulnerable and challenging young people, although they are not yet fully integrated into the work of the 14–19 partnership.

51. The further education college, working collaboratively with schools, leads the successful Increased Flexibility Programme to offer a wide range of vocational education opportunities and nationally recognised qualifications for approximately 400 young people, almost 80% of whom are from vulnerable groups. The programme effectively places many young people with work-based learning providers. The Ofsted 2007 annual assessment visit confirmed that the college, judged to be outstanding in its 2005 inspection, has maintained its high level of learner achievement and improved retention across its whole provision.

52. Positive action by the partnership, including a significant contribution by the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC), has improved access to and success in the vocational curriculum. The proportion of young people achieving a Level 2 qualification at age 19 has increased by 6% from 2004 to 60%, and at Level 3 by 3% to 33% over the same period. However, the partnership recognises that more needs to be done to raise standards of attainment to bring them closer to national averages. Success in NVQ Level 2 rose to 71% in 2006. Poor-performing work-based learning provision has been removed during the last two years by the LSC and this has contributed significantly to improved performance, with success rates at 63% compared with 34% in 2004. The proportion of 16 to 19 year-olds in learning has risen by 19% from 2004 to 79% in 2006.

53. The number of young people aged 16 to 18 not in education, employment or training has fallen and is reducing at a faster rate than nationally. However, at 12% it still remains higher than the national average. While the proportion of young people participating in learning is increasing, the numbers who leave at age 17 and 18 are high. Almost 10% of the age group are in employment without nationally recognised training. Reducing the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training and increasing the numbers who remain in learning beyond the age of 17 are key priorities for the partnership. Good data about these groups are analysed by Connexions and help to inform the action plan of the Information, Advice and Guidance Subgroup. Well-targeted initiatives to tackle these issues are in place, including projects with

employers and improved resources to support careers education and guidance in schools.

Service management



Capacity to improve



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Effective leadership and management of children's services.</p> <p>Strong track record of improvement in key priority areas.</p> <p>Good engagement and consultation with parents, children and young people in shaping the partnership strategy.</p> <p>Good partnership working and involvement of the voluntary sector.</p> <p>Strong focus on inclusion and tackling disadvantage.</p> <p>Good access to services for young people and hard-to-reach groups.</p>	<p>Poor current financial position in the council and weak medium term financial strategy.</p> <p>Evaluation of impact and value of local projects.</p> <p>Some key strategies are not supported by service delivery plans with clear timescales, milestones and deadlines.</p>

55. Structural reorganisation and the integration of services for children and young people have been effectively managed. The council and its partners have given the improvement of outcomes for children and young people the highest priority in recent years. They are currently making a good contribution to improving the achievement and well-being of children and young people within a city that faces significant social and economic challenges. This work has been led by a strong senior management team. The Director of Children's Services was promoted to the position of Chief Executive of the council in April 2007.

56. The ambitions of the council and its partners for children and young people are good. Effective strategic leadership is being provided by the council and its partners. They have developed clear and consensual aims, mission, vision and priorities for children and young people. The partnership benefits from well-established, strong relationships amongst partners and has wide representation from partner organisations. There is a shared vision on the development and implementation of integrated services for children. Ambitions reflect the involvement and contribution from the local community, parents and children, and key stakeholders. The CYPP produced by the partnership outlines a clearly stated and challenging vision for children and young people. The plan demonstrates links and alignment of targets between the Local Area Agreement and the council plan. The council has made significant progress in its development of children's centres and extended schools facilities. The council and its partners have the appropriate processes in place for translating joint ambitions into action, although in some cases the ambitions are not sufficiently supported by delivery plans at local level.

57. Prioritisation is good. The improvement of outcomes for children and young people has been a key council priority for the last five years. The council has consistently provided strong financial commitment and support to deliver improved outcomes in this area, most notably in educational attainment. Despite council-wide priority budget setting being underdeveloped, there is a clear commitment from officers, members and partners to continue raising educational attainment. Children and young people are seen as an integral part of the council's priority to regenerate the local economy. There are clear partnership priorities for children and young people that reflect a good balance between national and local priorities. Resources have been successfully targeted to bring about a reduction in teenage pregnancy, remodel the youth service and provide positive activities for young people. Children's services have been very proactive in the development of its shared service agreement, with schools directing joint funding at key priority areas to raise achievement, reduce exclusions and improve attendance.

58. All council projects and services are shaped by extensive community consultation, with the council making significant efforts to engage with children and young people, for example through schools and the Youth Parliament. Priorities are based on a clear articulation of need and gaps in provision for all groups. The council has successfully improved access to services for all and for hard-to-reach groups, most notably by providing free access to leisure services for all young people, through its youth work with young Somalis and Yemeni and through the work of the youth engagement workers.

59. The track record of the partnership in achieving its priorities is good. Examples of positive working include: effective early intervention and identification of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in early years; intensive challenge and support to schools, with rapid improvement in educational attainment at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 and a lower exclusion rate than in similar areas; well-developed communications with children who are

looked after by the council; good youth services and youth offending service; a good multi-agency approach to domestic violence; a well-developed Connexions service.

60. The capacity of the council and its partners to deliver better outcomes for children and young people is adequate overall. There are some important strengths, particularly in senior leadership and workforce capacity within children's services and in partnership working. There is also strong strategic capacity and clarity of political and professional leadership. The establishment of a new senior management team has introduced a fresh impetus to leadership, secured new momentum and is tackling an ambitious agenda to which front line staff are committed. The council is further building its capacity to meet the children's agenda through the establishment of jointly funded posts with health and the strengthening of project management, most notably for Building Schools for the Future.

61. The council has adopted a range of effective actions in order to tackle capacity issues in relation to the retention and recruitment of social workers and teachers. Measures have included the use of targeted recruitment campaigns, a strong focus on in-house professional training, performance-related pay for social work team leaders, and the development and improvement of career paths. The council therefore does not currently have any serious staff shortages that are affecting service delivery, and the staffing capacity within the organisation is good. The council and its partners have completed consultation on a draft workforce development strategy and have identified job classifications within the partnership. However, progress in developing an overarching council-wide workforce plan, setting out how the council and partners will meet its medium to long-term needs, has been slow, and comprehensive data from across the area have not yet been coordinated to identify more fully future workforce needs across children's services.

62. Capacity is further enhanced through good partnership working and working with the voluntary sector. There are many good examples of effective partnership and inter-agency working, including the multi-agency work being done to tackle anti-social behaviour through the safer neighbourhood service and the 14–19 Learning Partnership collaboration with schools. Staff have been trained on the Common Assessment Framework but it has not yet been used to jointly plan service delivery. The voluntary sector is being used to strengthen capacity and to target provision effectively to the most vulnerable. For example, work with schools and the use of outreach for hard-to-reach families has significantly increased the use of the children's centres and the accessing of support for young carers. The partnership has been proactive in involving children and parents in designing new services, most notably in the development of the Mill Road Short-term Breaks Unit and transitional accommodation for young people, and the design of the children's centres.

63. Current arrangements for service commissioning for children and young people are being developed effectively. The partners have produced a commissioning strategy for the Children and Young People's Partnership and there are examples of effective joint commissioning, such as provision to meet the health needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for CAMHS. There are some initial examples of alignment or the pooling of budgets, including the procurement of equipment for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The council plans to make this the core activity of the Children's Partnership from spring 2008.

64. Financial resources within children's services overall have been well managed to secure improving outcomes for children and young people. The high levels of need in the city mean that the cost of some services, such as family support, is high. The council has managed an overspend in social care for a number of years. Exercises are planned to identify savings, for example to reduce high costs of looked after children placements and corrective action is being taken to deal with the projected overspends, for example to meet the increased number of unaccompanied asylum seekers. Whilst funding has been successfully secured in the past and there is a clear commitment to children's services, corporate budget setting is weak and there is a council-wide funding gap from 2007/08 onwards. The council's medium-term financial plan does not clearly identify longer term needs or how funding will be prioritised to services for children and young people after 2007/08. This limits the ability for services for children and young people to fully plan for the future.

65. Services for children and young people represent adequate value for money. Investment has resulted in improved services and outcomes in some key areas, such as educational attainment and provision for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children's services have delivered improvement in cost and efficiencies in areas such as day nursery provision and the treatment foster care contract, but have been slower in formulating strategies to improve value for money in areas of higher expenditure such as external foster care placements. The use of cost and performance information to enable children's services to better demonstrate where higher spending is required is underdeveloped and the council does not have a systematic process for evaluating the impact and value of local projects. There are a number of schools carrying high balances but the council is taking appropriate steps for schools with significant budget surpluses, most notably through its claw-back process. Benchmarking is used well in reviewing some services, such as school effectiveness, but comparative cost benchmarking is not fully embedded across all services.

66. Performance management is adequate overall. Good use is made of staff appraisal to help drive forward initiatives and identify training and development needs, however, delivery plans for some key strategic plans are not yet embedded fully across the council. There is an established corporate performance management and planning framework. Children's services collect and analyse data on the services they provide and monitor their service

performance against clearly identified performance indicators, through the quarterly reporting review process. There are good examples of the partnership dealing with areas of underperformance; for example, improvements in the number of core assessments and duration times on the child protection register. Scrutiny arrangements within the partnership are developing, with some good outcomes. The partnership involves children and young people in performance management through its Youth Parliament as, for example, in the development of the anti-bullying strategy.

67. Adequate progress is being made in developing performance management arrangements for the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership; for example, the development of performance information with partners is occurring at the strategic level. However, delivery plans with clear targets and milestones are not fully in place across all services to enable the partnership board to monitor the implementation of some strategies, such as the children's services workforce development strategy. The LSCB has well-established and effective performance management arrangements.

68. The overall capacity of the council to continue to build on its previous good work for children and young people is adequate. The council has a strong track record of improvement and good management, and workforce capacity to bring about further improvement. The review of the CYPP shows collective commitment from the council and its partners to further integrate services and secure better outcomes, particularly for the most vulnerable, based on good awareness of community need and the key areas for improvement. However, sustainability is hindered by the council-wide financial difficulties and the fact that the council's medium-term financial plan does not clearly identify longer term needs or how funding will be prioritised to services for children and young people after 2007/08 further impacts on the level of confidence inspectors have in the local authority securing future improvements.

Annex A

MOST RECENTLY PUBLISHED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN LIVERPOOL

Liverpool City Council consistently delivers above minimum requirements and makes a good contribution towards improving outcomes for children and young people. Children's services make a significant contribution to improving the achievement and well-being of children and young people within a city that faces significant social and economic challenges.

The full annual performance assessment can be found at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=283164&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa_2007_341.pdf

Annex B: Summary of the Enhanced Youth Inspection Report

Main findings

1. The local authority sufficiently secures the provision of youth work. Overall, the provision is good. Youth work in Liverpool is founded on a well established model of local authority and voluntary sector provision. Collectively, these provide good opportunities for young people with much of the work very responsive to local needs. The voluntary sector work is further strengthened by secondments of city council workers. Achievement and youth work practice are generally good and many projects are successful in engaging vulnerable groups. Youth work projects are sensitive to minority groups and workers are responding well to the needs of changing communities and inward migration. Use is made of various funding strands to provide high quality resources in music, sound recording, animation and mobile provision. Together with responsive workers, such provision is proving attractive to young people. A significant minority of the building stock is of unacceptable quality. There are at times disappointing inconsistencies in respect of delivery, curriculum and management across the five areas. The service could usefully identify and build on best practice where it exists. Service-wide and area plans are weak and staff in both sectors are not always deployed to best effect. Strategically the youth service and its partners are well placed to contribute to the evolving integrated youth support service due to be launched in 2008. Youth service staff have helped pioneer the City Council's new area committee structures. Quality assurance procedures are satisfactory but the service struggles with data collection, albeit that new procedures are beginning to make an impact. Staff undergo the necessary Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks but slow recruitment procedures lead to delays in their deployment.

Key aspect inspection grades

Key Aspect		Grade
1	Standards of young people's achievement	3
	Quality of youth work practice	3
2	Quality of curriculum and resources	2
3	Leadership and management	3

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale
4: excellent / outstanding; 3: good; 2: adequate/satisfactory; 1: inadequate*

Strengths

- Good achievement and some innovative practice.
- Highly effective use of specialist provision and specialist staff.
- Effective engagement and empowerment of young people.
- A strong focus on neighbourhood issues.
- Sensitive and responsive youth workers.
- Good and improving engagement with an increasingly diverse range of agencies.

Areas for development

- Address inconsistencies in practice across areas.
- Review the management of the curriculum.
- Introduce an accommodation strategy.
- Improve planning, particularly in respect of service and area targets.
- Ensure the effectiveness of all area committees.

Annex C

CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Outcomes for children and young people in Liverpool are improving and many are now good. Good action is being taken to improve the health of children and young people and this is beginning to show impact, for example in increasing participation in physical activity and reducing the incidence of teenage pregnancy. The majority of children and young people are provided with a safe environment and outcomes for children and young people requiring safeguarding are good. Educational outcomes are improving rapidly and most are in line with or above those of statistical neighbours. Standards attained at GCSE are significantly improved and are close to the national average. Outcomes for looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good.

2. The overall management of services for children and young people is good. Effective professional leadership, a strong commitment from officers and members, and good partnership working are improving the achievement and well-being of children and young people. The ambitions of the council and its partners reflect the involvement from parents, children and key stakeholders, and are good. Partners have a strong track record of achieving on priorities; they have successfully improved educational outcomes for young people in the area. Services are currently representing adequate value for money. There are some good examples of the partnership dealing with areas of underperformance, and scrutiny arrangements are delivering some good outcomes. However, sustainability is hindered by the council-wide financial difficulties and the council's medium-term financial plan does not clearly identify longer term needs or how funding will be prioritised to services for children and young people after 2007/08. The capacity of the council and its partners to continue to deliver better outcomes for children and young people is adequate overall.

3. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Children's centres have dedicated oral health workers and provide ante-natal care, anti-smoking and breastfeeding support. Initiatives such as the Healthy Schools programme, School Sports Partnerships, Active City and free access to sports centres are promoting active and healthy lifestyles. There are good multi-agency projects providing flexible support for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties and substance and alcohol misuse problems. Partners have established specialist services to meet the health needs of vulnerable and minority ethnic groups. Health outcomes for looked after children are good. Health needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are generally well met, but there are long waiting times for Speech and Language Therapy services.

4. Arrangements to ensure the safety of children and young people are good. There is a strong multi-agency commitment to safeguarding children in the community, and good partnership working to prevent involvement in anti-social behaviour, violent crime and gangs. The LSCB is effective, with strong commitment from a wide range of partner agencies. It is currently addressing the fact that no privately fostered children have been identified and are known to social care services. Thresholds for early intervention and referral to social care are clearly defined to enable agencies to meet different levels of need. Extensive training has been provided on the Common Assessment Framework but not all agencies are fully engaged in its implementation. A relatively high proportion of looked after children are fostered by relatives and friends. They are regularly monitored through statutory visits and reviews, but outcomes for these children are generally not as good as they are for children placed with foster carers or in residential homes.

5. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and to achieve well is good. Intensive challenge and support has led to rapid improvement at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more A*–C grades at GCSE increased in 2007 to 61.3%, which brings the percentage close to the national average. The majority of black and ethnic groups make satisfactory progress, although Somali and Yemeni groups have lower than average attainment. Targeted support to help new arrivals develop literacy and language skills has been put in place. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Looked after children's attainment fluctuates year on year but improved in 2007. Targeted support to reduce absence in secondary schools is showing some impact. However, authorised absence overall remains high compared to national averages, and is particularly high for looked after children and those with statements of special educational need in mainstream schools.

6. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. There is an innovative and strategic approach to young people's participation and to listening to young people's views. Young people contribute to staff recruitment and there are examples of services developing in response to their views. There are good opportunities for looked after children to contribute to decisions being made about their lives but procedures to record their participation in reviews do not accurately capture their involvement. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good opportunities to contribute within their schools, through the youth service, the Youth Parliament and through consultation meetings. Partners have a unified and strategic approach to tackling anti-social behaviour and to prevent young people becoming involved in violent crime and gangs. However, there is a lack of involvement in consultation and participation by children and young people engaged by the youth offending service.

7. The impact of all local services in improving the economic well-being of children and young people is good. The 14–19 Learning Partnership provides effective strategic leadership and direction for the development of 14–19

provision. Good collaborative working between schools and with the college underpins the ongoing improvement in achievement at ages 14 to 16. School consortia are well established and are improving the quality of 16–19 education and training. Post-16 provision has broadened the curriculum, increased the mobility of young people, and raised rates of recruitment, retention and attainment. Although the number of young people not in education, employment or training has fallen and is reducing at a faster rate than nationally, it is still higher than the national figure, and the numbers who leave at age 17 and 18 are high.

Annex D

SUMMARY OF JOINT AREA REVIEW AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS

1. This joint area review was conducted using the arrangements required under Section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of inspectors from Ofsted, the Healthcare Commission and the Audit Commission. The review was undertaken according to the requirements of the *Framework for the inspection of children's services*.

2. The review was linked to the contemporaneous corporate assessment of the local council by the Audit Commission and these findings, plus aspects of the most recent annual performance assessment, are represented in the relevant part of the corporate assessment report.

3. This review describes the outcomes achieved by children and young people growing up in Liverpool and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being. Together with the annual performance assessment of children's services, joint area reviews focus on the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and are well prepared to secure economic well-being. This review explores these issues by focusing on children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, children who are looked after, children at risk or requiring safeguarding, and a few additional investigations. It evaluates the collective contribution made by all relevant children's services to outcomes for these children and young people.

4. The review took place in two stages, consisting of an analysis stage (where recorded evidence was scrutinised) and a two-week fieldwork stage (where inspectors met children and young people and those who deliver services for them).