

# Joint area review

**Knowsley Children's Services Authority Area**

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## 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  
Ofsted

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## Introduction

1. The most recent annual performance assessment (APA) for Knowsley judged the council's children's services as outstanding, and its capacity to improve as outstanding.
2. This report assesses the contribution of local services in ensuring the following for children and young people:
  - effective care for those at risk or requiring safeguarding
  - the best possible outcomes for those who are looked after
  - the best possible outcomes for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
3. The following investigations were also undertaken:
  - an investigation into the impact of health services in reducing inequalities
  - an investigation into the impact of school improvement services on outcomes at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3.

## Context

4. Knowsley is one of the five metropolitan districts of Merseyside and is the third most deprived borough in England. Of the 149,000 residents, 26% are under 19 years old, compared with 23% nationally. Fewer than 2% of residents are from Black and minority ethnic groups, compared with 9% nationally. Unemployment rates are relatively high and over 30% of people live in low income households, which is 2.5 times the national average. The population is concentrated mainly in three townships around Huyton, Kirkby and Halewood.
5. The Council's children's services have achieved an effective transition over the last 15 months moving from an Education Department to a Children's Services directorate. A new service structure has been established. Children's services encompasses universal, preventative, targeted and specialist services across the Council's Directorates of Children's services and Health and Social Care. This is due to the significant health inequalities that exist within the borough and builds on the strong partnership between the Council and the PCT. Children's Social Care services are commissioned by the Director of Children's Services from the Directorate of Health and Social Care. However, overall accountability rests with the Director of Children's Services and the lead member. Management arrangements are clearly set out in an Accountability Framework.
6. Pre-16 provision comprises:

- 254 private or voluntary early years settings and 10 children's centres, with a further three soon to be completed
  - 55 primary schools
  - 10 secondary schools
  - seven special schools including three primary support centres
  - one pupil referral unit.
7. Post-16 education and training is provided by two school sixth forms, one college and six work-based training providers. Adult and community learning, including family learning, are provided by Knowsley Council.
8. The lead provider for Entry to Employment provision is Knowsley College.
9. Primary care is provided by Knowsley Primary Care Trust (PCT). Acute hospital services are provided by the Royal Liverpool Children's Hospital, St Helen's and Knowsley Hospitals, Aintree University Hospital Foundation Trust and the Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospital NHS Trust. Maternity services are delivered by St Helens and Knowsley NHS Trust, The Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust, and Southport and Ormskirk NHS Trust. Mental health services are provided by the Five Boroughs Partnership Trust and MerseyCare.
10. Children's social care services are provided through 129 foster carers, four children's residential care homes, four family centres and one respite unit for children with disabilities. The council looks after 290 children and young people.

## Main findings

11. The main findings of this joint area review are as follows:
- arrangements for safeguarding children and young people are adequate. Preventative work is good. Processes for identifying and assessing risk for some children and young people who may be placed on the child protection register are insufficiently robust and there is a lack of managerial oversight and quality assurance of some case files
  - agencies work well to meet the needs of looked after children. These children and young people are safe, healthy and benefit from stable placements. Their education outcomes are adequate but further improvements are required. High quality work has enabled all care leavers to enter education, employment and training in 2006

- outcomes for children and young people with learning and/or physical disabilities are generally good. Improved multi-agency working is securing an improving, integrated and responsive service
- educational outcomes for children and young people are adequate. In 2006, standards overall declined across Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 following a number of years of improvement, but schools are being appropriately challenged to set higher targets for achievement, with early indications that actions are having a positive impact on raising standards
- long-term programmes for tackling health inequalities are generally ensuring improving outcomes for children and young people. For example, immunisation rates for measles have steadily increased for two year olds, and there is a continuing reduction in teenage pregnancies. Further improvements are needed, however, in oral health
- the youth service provides an adequate service for its users and offers satisfactory value for money
- the youth offending service inspection reported some good work with children and young people who have offended, particularly in health and education. However, work with those at risk of offending is inadequate, with limited assessment and poor overview of safeguarding issues
- service management is adequate. There is effective and stable senior leadership and a well-motivated and knowledgeable lead member. Monitoring of action plans and some service areas has not been robust, for example there has been ineffective monitoring of the performance, management and leadership of the youth service and aspects of the Youth Offending service
- capacity to improve further is good. The council and its partners share and demonstrate good ambition for children and young people. This is based on good analysis of data, with local needs well understood. There is effective and stable senior leadership, and a high level of integration with the Primary Care Trust is improving health services for children and young people. The well-managed Change for Children programme supports practical delivery of the ambition for the area.

## Grades

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

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

## 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.

The local authority should:

- ensure that assessment and planning in social care continually focus on identifying and reducing risk for all children and young people living in families where there are welfare concerns
- ensure the effective oversight of children's social care assessment, case planning and recording.

### For action over the next six months

The local authority and its partners should:

- improve the quality and timeliness of personal education plans
- review the approach to performance management, to include:
  - a systematic evaluation of the robustness of action plans at the time they are drawn up
  - processes for the ongoing review and evaluation of action plans, including progress reporting

- be more explicit about the strategic approach and the actions the partnership expects to be taken with regard to equality and diversity, including race relations, community cohesion and equality of access to services.

### For action in the longer term

- ensure significant improvements in the oral health of children.

## Equality and diversity

12. There is some good work at an operational level to promote equality and diversity. Good preventative work is undertaken in schools, including raising awareness of homophobic and racial bullying. There are very small numbers of children from Black and minority ethnic groups, but the promotion of cultural diversity in schools is supported well by the schools themselves and the strong work of the cultural and diversity officer. Children with English as an additional language receive good and responsive support. The strategic approach to equality and diversity across the partnership is not sufficiently explicit. The new participation standards, which have been newly adopted and launched by the Children and Young People's Partnership, are intended to ensure services are responsive to the needs of all children and young people, and the first service accreditations are due to take place in December 2007. There are no specific actions with regards to equality and diversity in the youth service business plan.

## Safeguarding



13. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people at risk or requiring safeguarding is adequate.** There is much good work in the borough to improve children's safety with schools, health and children's social care services at the forefront of preventative support. The 2006 APA reported that the council's contribution to outcomes in staying safe was excellent, due to the range of positive contributions by agencies, in particular earlier intervention and support, and the robust response to the children most at risk. However, the joint area review, which is a much more in depth investigation of the local authority and partners, found that the approaches to identifying and assessing risk for some children and young people were insufficiently robust. In some cases there was a lack of managerial oversight and quality assurance of case files.



14. Information provided for children on safety issues is good. Teachers, health visitors and police officers give this high priority and ensure that children know what to do if they need help and assistance. Work undertaken across Merseyside by the Fire Service in relation to fire starting is particularly innovative and successful. Information for parents and carers on safety issues, and how to deal with them, is adequate. There is a good Safe Parenting leaflet that is easy to read and covers general issues, but there is limited locally produced information on the support available locally for parents and carers seeking help. Much good work has been done to improve road safety in the borough and this has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of children and young people being seriously injured.

15. There is good multi-agency work to tackle some of the wider safeguarding issues in the community, including prevention and targeted responses to bullying, both in and out of schools, and in relation to hate crime. All schools have anti-bullying policies in place and school inspections report positively on this work in many schools. Much good work has taken place with school staff, including governors and non-teaching staff, to raise awareness and improve the response to vulnerable children. All agencies have access to training and this has contributed positively to an evident culture of information sharing and earlier support for children in need. However, the safeguarding arrangements in the multi-agency Youth Offending Service are not sufficiently robust with weaknesses, in particular, in assessments. There is excellent work providing support in relation to domestic violence, in particular the Rainbow Project and Hidden Voices. Mothers and their children speak positively about this support and how their lives have been improved through it. Some express concerns, however, about inconsistent responses from schools, due to an apparent lack of awareness amongst teaching staff about the impact of domestic violence.

16. Overall, the work to minimise the incidence of abuse and neglect is adequate but there are some weaker features. All children on the child protection register are allocated to appropriately qualified workers and regular multi-agency meetings coordinate well the work for vulnerable children. All children are regularly visited but not always by their allocated social worker. Social care workers engage directly with families and work to improve outcomes achieved by children and young people. However, there are inconsistencies with regard to social care practice across the four locality teams, and too much crisis management. Some workers reported to inspectors that they were overwhelmed by their workload. There are some weaknesses with regard to the completion of ongoing formal assessments following child protection registration and there is a lack of managerial oversight and quality assurance of some case files leading to a lack of consistency of approach and practice.

17. The Knowsley Safeguarding Children Board (KSCB) is delivering to the national standards. It has begun to audit and evaluate the quality of the management of child protection activity and is developing policies and planning processes. There are good safe recruitment policies across all agencies, and these issues have been appropriately considered by the KSCB. Two recent child

deaths were carefully reviewed by the KSCB but learning from one of these was not shared fully across all local agencies. The multi-agency arrangements to protect children and young people from serious offenders in the community are good and fully consider the risks to children and young people.

18. There are good approaches to children who go missing from education, home or care, with clear responsibilities, guidance and identified multi-agency work. Children receiving home tuition are carefully tracked and quickly offered support services, although some children only receive the minimum required support.

19. There are good preventative services available from family centres and the local authority Flexible Support team, providing support for younger vulnerable children and for young people and their families. The Pride Sure Start Centre provides an excellent range of coordinated services which have clearly had a positive impact on the lives of vulnerable children in the Kirkby area.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Effective work by staff in schools, health professionals and the police in raising safeguarding concerns.</p> <p>Good information sharing and early support for children in need.</p> <p>Good support from family centres and the Flexible Support team.</p> <p>The positive impact of the Pride Sure Start Children's Centre, Butterflies Project and Hidden Voices.</p> <p>Good support to children who go missing from education, home or care.</p>	<p>A lack of consistent focus on risk in assessments and planning in social care casework.</p> <p>Lack of evidence of managerial oversight and quality assurance in some social care casework.</p> <p>Pressure of work that leads to some frontline social care staff feeling overwhelmed.</p>

## Looked after children and young people



20. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people is good.** Looked after children appear safe and agencies work well to meet their needs. Good work is undertaken to ensure that almost all are placed within or near to their local area with adoptive families or with foster carers, including the 55 who are

fostered within their wider family. The fostering service was judged outstanding by regulatory inspection. Good attention is paid to providing permanent placements and to enable looked after children to have meaningful contact with their families. Very few children experience three or more placement moves within a year and stability for children in long-term foster care is in line with the national picture. Carers and residential staff are well supported and trained; children benefit from the skilled care they provide. Health provision is effective and of good quality; in the last year 92% of children received an annual health check, which is significantly higher than the national average. Children and young people make adequate progress in secondary schools but further improvements are required. Well-focused multi-agency support to care leavers has a clear impact on the quality of their lives, and they value this highly. One young person said 'if anything goes wrong I know I've got them behind me'.

21. The 2006 APA commented on a 'mixed picture' in respect of attainment and attendance. Most children in foster care and children's homes attend school regularly but attendance remains poor for a very small number of young people placed with their parents. Only 69% of children and young people have personal education plans by their first review, and the plans seen during the inspection were insufficiently detailed, and targets lacked rigour.

22. The number of pupils in each year group cohort is small; for example last year there were 14 young people in Year 11, and of these only 10 attended schools in Knowsley and the rest were placed in schools in other boroughs. Twelve of these young people were entered for GCSE; two of them had statements of special educational need and five more were receiving additional support from School Action and School Action Plus. In total, 10 pupils gained one or more A\*–G grades at GCSE, a further three achieved one or more passes at A\*–C, and another was successful in attaining three entry level qualifications. Almost all of them were also offered work-based learning opportunities and were enabled to access a wider variety of accredited courses. The imaginative Knowsley Action Team for Youth (KATY) project supported 10 young people to gain the ASDAN bronze award this year, focusing on basic literacy and numeracy skills. Given their prior attainment, these outcomes represent good levels of achievement for the young people in the cohort.

23. The lead and support members for children's services have a good grasp of the needs of looked after children. Committed elected members discharge their responsibilities effectively and priorities are well understood. There is a sound focus on improvement, for example the council has rightly recognised the need to develop arrangements for the external scrutiny of children's homes and to increase the frequency of opportunities for children to contribute to service development and corporate parenting. Looked after children have effectively contributed to the local participation standards and they are appropriately represented on the Children and Young People's Forum.

24. All children and care leavers are allocated to qualified social workers, their concerns are mostly well addressed and they know how to make complaints, although few do. All children's homes meet regulatory requirements and take good action to implement recommendations effectively. Agencies share information well and processes such as the Accommodation Panel for overseeing children in placement are appropriately in place. Children's cases are regularly reviewed. Effective arrangements ensure that all looked after children communicate their views and the independent advocacy service is correctly focused on increasing the numbers of those who do so in person. Long term planning for younger children, including those within family proceedings, is well developed and robust. Multi-agency planning for care leavers is strong; all have pathway plans and a very high number contribute actively to these. There is a good choice of accommodation for care leavers and well-coordinated interagency support enables them to successfully maintain their own tenancies or to remain with their foster carers after the age of 18.

25. Health needs are addressed well by a specialist health team. Good health promotion results in improved outcomes, for example the well-targeted smoking cessation service received 54 referrals between February 2006 and 2007, and good action enabled 38 young people to reduce or stop smoking. Imaginative approaches to reducing substance misuse, such as the production of a booklet about non-alcoholic cocktails, engage young people well. As a result, 29 of the 38 young people recently engaged with this service have ceased or reduced their substance misuse, including their alcohol intake. The emotional health and well-being of all those newly looked after is effectively assessed. Looked after children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and care leavers receive a good and timely service from a dedicated child and adolescent mental health team (CAMHS).

<b>Major strengths</b>	<b>Important weaknesses</b>
<p>The fostering and adoption services and permanency planning for younger children.</p> <p>Action to place looked after children within the wider family and to enable all to maintain contact with their families.</p> <p>Well coordinated health assessment, health promotion and support.</p> <p>Effective multi-agency working with care leavers.</p> <p>The high numbers of care leavers engaged in education, employment and training.</p>	<p>The quality of personal education plans.</p> <p>Attainment and attendance at school for some looked after children.</p>

## Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Inadequate Adequate Good Outstanding 

26. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.** The majority of key outcomes for children and young people with learning and/or physical disabilities are good. The 2006 APA judged that services were working effectively together to ensure children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were safe and their individual needs met. This strong partnership working has been sustained. Improved multi-agency working between health, education and social care is providing all children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with an effective and responsive service. The identification of the child development centre as the single referral and assessment agency is proving highly effective in providing a prompt and responsive service. Whilst formal arrangements for the joint commissioning of services are at an early stage, the strong partnership arrangements established through the centre ensure appropriate allocation of funding.

27. The needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and well managed through the child development centre and the newly-established complex care panel. All assessments take place at a location to suit the parent or carer. Innovative use of funding provides children with complex needs with a wide range of specialist equipment, enabling them to remain in their own home. For example, a good supply of specialist beds minimises the amount of lifting for parents and carers.

28. The council has worked hard to improve the quality and timeliness of statutory processes. It has been highly successful in increasing the number of special educational needs statements completed within statutory timescales, rising from 64% in 2003 to 95% in 2006. A relatively high number of children are placed in special schools across the borough, but these children and young people have very good opportunities to participate in a range of activities and lessons in local mainstream primary and secondary schools. The council has ambitious plans to co-locate special schools within the new learning campuses being developed through Building Schools for the Future. The council has worked well with schools in making changes, and senior school staff speak positively about their involvement in the building plans.

29. Successful partnership working has enabled the provision of good accredited staff training. This includes training many teaching assistants to improve the ability of schools to meet the needs of children with speech,

language and communication difficulties, and training for a wide range of school and other staff to support and manage challenging behaviour. This is beginning to have an impact on improving classroom management.

30. Inspection findings judge that most schools are effectively promoting inclusion. Healthy and safe lifestyles are promoted particularly well and individualised learning is used effectively to enable most young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress. Equality and diversity are promoted well and appropriate attention paid to the cultures of different pupils. All schools are now evaluating the progress of those children working below Key Stage 1 through the use of P scales.<sup>1</sup> However, this data is only currently analysed at individual school level but the authority plans to use comparative data across the borough from September 2007 in order to monitor and improve the progress of these young people. Outcomes for young people at Key Stages 1 and 2 who are at School Action and School Action Plus on the special educational needs register or those with statements of special educational need, are at least adequate and in some cases significantly better when compared with national and similar authorities. At Key Stage 4, significantly higher proportions of all children with statements of special educational need achieve five grade A\*–C GCSEs. Success rates in work-based learning for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very good at 100% and were significantly above national rates of 92% in 2006.

31. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have good opportunities to contribute their views about their own learning and wider issues, for example in reviews and through their school councils, the Youth Forum and the Youth Parliament. Their views are also taken into account in council surveys and through accessible consultative events. Schools are highly effective in enabling young people to advocate for one another. Others are supported to act as mentors to younger children in out-of-school activities. The children and young people speak positively about their involvement.

32. Effective links are developed with other agencies so that appropriate support is available to those who meet the criteria for services. Care plans are reviewed regularly and good progress is being made in the introduction and use of the Common Assessment Framework. High quality respite care provides a wide range of options for children and young people and is effective in meeting the different religious and cultural needs of young people.

33. Support services offered by a broad range of organisations, in particular the Parent Partnership, make a significant difference to children and young people with learning and/or physical disabilities and their families. Parents are encouraged to take on responsibility for a range of specialist support groups and to provide other parents, carers and professionals with training. The wider support needs of children are assessed well, but not all parents have a

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<sup>1</sup> P scales: A national scheme used in schools to recognise and assess small steps in learning made by pupils with more severe and complex special educational needs who work below National Curriculum Level 1.

comprehensive assessment of their needs and some are uncertain how to access the support and information they want. The number of families who receive direct payments is increasing, and families in receipt of these are appreciative of the flexibility this gives them.

34. A reducing number of children are being placed outside of the borough. The monitoring and review of one of these external placements was insufficiently rigorous. Attendance of some agencies at the annual reviews on this case was inconsistent and a transition review had not been held. In addition, detailed planning for transition for this young person, in particular, where he would live and continue with his education had been delayed.

35. However, services work together well to ensure that most transitions are successful. Connexions personal advisers and other support staff attend pupils' last two transition reviews. A broad and flexible range of learning is available to young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities through the school and college 14–19 collegiate and through the work-based learning programme. Innovative vocational pathways have been established that enable young people to make progress and to achieve well.

36. Complex packages of care are supported in transition but a few young people do not have a positive experience when transferring into adult services, in particular in ensuring continuity of support. The council has identified this as a priority and a transition coordinator has recently been appointed.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Well coordinated collaborative provision to ensure early identification and support for children and young people with learning and/or physical disabilities.</p> <p>Strong partnership working.</p> <p>The improvement in the number of statements of special educational need produced within statutory timescales.</p> <p>The range and quality of respite provision.</p> <p>Wide range of good vocational learning opportunities.</p>	

## Other issues identified for further investigation

### The impact of school improvement services on outcomes at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3

37. **The impact of local services in improving outcomes for children and young people at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 is adequate.** Significant numbers of children in Knowsley live in areas of high deprivation. Many enter school with very poor language and communication skills. These difficulties pervade educational attainment throughout all key stages. Standards overall at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 are below or well below national averages. Schools are provided with good quality support with a clear focus on improving teaching and learning. There are early signs that standards are beginning to improve as a result of the increased level of challenge and support provided by the local authority.

38. The APA in 2006, based on 2005 education data, judged that the contribution of children's services towards improving educational achievement was good. Overall, however, standards in 2006 across Key Stages 1, 2 & 3, dropped from those in 2005 and the rate of progress from one key stage to the next was below or well below the national average.

39. Results at Key Stage 1 have declined over the last four years and are now in line with similar areas but below or well below national averages.<sup>2</sup> At Key Stage 2, results are broadly in line with similar areas and the national average, but the rate of improvement is inconsistent. Of the 55 primary schools in Knowsley, 17 were below the minimum targets for English and/or mathematics set by the government. Results at Key Stage 3 are generally below those in similar areas and nationally. In English and science the rate of improvement is below that elsewhere but there has been a more rapid increase in mathematics results than nationally. Targeted action at Key Stage 4 has resulted in improving outcomes over the last three years. These results are now in line with similar areas and below national averages but are improving at a faster rate than both.

40. The recently revised School Improvement Partnership Framework embodies greater levels of challenge to schools by expecting them to achieve higher-level targets for attainment. The local authority is working with schools to increase their level of skill in using the data made available to focus more sharply on school self-evaluation, monitoring pupils' progress and setting targets for improvement.

41. Implementation of the national strategies and Intensifying Support Programme to improve teaching and raise standards is good. Good use is being made of expertise within the school community to support weaker schools

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<sup>2</sup> Results referred to are the validated results for 2006.



through strong area collaborative arrangements and formal federations. There are early indications that this range of support is having a positive impact on standards. The local authority expects improved results in 2007 with all primary schools reaching the minimum targets set by the government for Key Stage 2.

42. The development of children's centres has been promoted well by the local authority and they are beginning to have a positive impact on children's preparedness for school. The provision of early years education is satisfactory or better. Targeted work on communication, language and literacy development in early years settings is beginning to have an impact on the communication and language skills of young children.

43. Primary support centres based within special schools provide good quality support to schools in identifying individual pupils' needs and developing strategies to remove barriers for these children.

44. Good work between the local authority and schools has resulted in improved attendance overall but unauthorised absence figures remain stubbornly higher than in similar areas and nationally. Headteachers have expressed concern that the capacity to maintain the focus on improving attendance will be weakened by the proposed withdrawal of funding for attendance support officers from March 2008.

45. Of 45 school inspections undertaken since September 2005 to June 2007, Ofsted judge provision to be outstanding in nine schools, good in 26 and satisfactory in eight. However, two schools have been placed in special measures, one of which did not make adequate progress in the first monitoring visit but is now judged to be making satisfactory progress. Firm action has been taken in a significant number of schools to bring about rapid improvement, but in one school causing concern, intervention has been slower to impact.

46. Local analysis of progression through the national curriculum levels between key stages identifies that some vulnerable groups of children, for example those entitled to free school meals, make slower progress than other children in the area. Differences in performance between boys and girls are identified, but these do not present a consistent pattern of underachievement in either group. Very small numbers of children from Black and minority ethnic and looked after children groups make comparisons unreliable.

47. There is good support for children with English as an additional language arriving in Knowsley. Schools are being provided with good training and resources to develop their own skills in supporting language acquisition through carefully targeted programmes which link well with the national strategies.

48. Pupils educated at home because of medical needs or school phobia receive the minimum five hours a week entitlement. Opportunities to extend these hours, offer a broad and balanced curriculum and social and recreational activities are limited by current staffing levels and lack of a suitable base.

49. The strategies being implemented to tackle underachievement and poor performance, the more challenging targets being set for schools and the sharper focus on holding schools accountable for raising standards embedded in the School Improvement Partnership Framework, place the local authority in a good position to bring about more rapid and sustained improvements in educational outcomes for children and young people, with predicted improved results for this year.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Progress in improving attainment at Key Stage 4.</p> <p>Support to schools through implementation of the national strategies.</p> <p>Strong area collaborative arrangements to support weaker schools.</p> <p>Support provided by the primary support centres.</p> <p>Joint work between schools and the local authority to improve attendance.</p>	<p>The variable rates of improvement in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3.</p> <p>Interventions in one school causing concern were slow to impact.</p> <p>Limited provision for children who receive home tuition.</p>

## The impact of health services in reducing health inequalities

50. **The impact of health services in reducing inequalities for children and young people is good.** Children and young people in Knowsley are well supported by a range of services aimed at improving their health and well-being. The APA in 2006 reported an excellent contribution by the council and particularly highlighted strengths in the prompt delivery of services for assessment and treatment. The CAMHS was also reported as being well developed. This inspection confirms many of these strengths. The local authority and the PCT deliver effective services through an integrated partnership. Long-term programmes tackling health inequalities are generally returning good outcomes for children and young people. However, there are some areas where there is slow improvement in outcomes. While the council and its partners have recognised these and have prioritised them within the children and young people's strategic plan and the PCT's local delivery plan, the focus on improvements is not always sufficiently robust to close the gap with national figures.

51. Coordination of the teenage pregnancy strategy is effective and has made good progress in reducing teenage conceptions, with a 20% reduction in the last seven years. The THINK clinics deliver a wide programme of health promotion and are well regarded by young people who frequently access the

services: in 2006–07 over 2,700 young people had used them. There is also an excellent mobile service 'Clinic in the Box' which targets geographical hotspot areas and works effectively in youth service settings. All young teenagers who become pregnant have access to specific antenatal and parent craft clinics that address their needs and support positive lifestyle changes.

52. The work to tackle smoking by mothers in pregnancy is adequate. The proportion of expectant mothers smoking during pregnancy is significantly higher (at 24%) than the national figure of 18%. However, the PCT and partners are working well and have updated the tobacco strategy for Knowsley with specific actions to improve smoking cessation in pregnancy. There are good links to voluntary services, such as 'Fag Ends', to provide additional support.

53. There is good interagency breastfeeding promotion throughout the borough. In 2006–07, the local target for breastfeeding initiation in the first 48 hours was set at 31%, and this was exceeded by 3%. An excellent initiative, the La Leche peer support programme, is operating in all areas of Knowsley with 50 mothers successfully recruited to become peer supporters in their own communities.

54. Parents and children receive good interagency health promotion and education across a variety of services including medical centres, baby clinics Sure Start Children Centres and schools. One particular community-based resource the Steps Forward programme is excellent and has provided valued support to twenty-five mothers over the last year who have postnatal depression. The mothers reported the positive impact of the programme on their personal self-esteem, well-being and parenting.

55. There are good targeted health visitor services, accessible in a variety of settings, providing preventative and family support care to families in Knowsley. All families are provided with a good postnatal assessment of needs, and individual plans are based on the needs of the family and child. There is good proactive work undertaken by the PCT to deliver the immunisation programme. Immunisation rates have steadily increased for two year olds for measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) so that the local target of 84.1% has been achieved.

56. Good focused action is taking place to reduce obesity in families and children. All pre-school children have access to milestone checks through the health visiting service. Since 2004, Energising Knowsley has been effective in raising the profile of obesity, physical activity and nutrition. Preliminary figures have indicated childhood obesity has reduced from 12.2% to 8.6%. Schools have made good progress to achieve healthy schools accreditation, 44 out of 77 have been accredited and all others are working towards the award, thus supporting and educating children and young people well in the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

57. The level of dental decay in children and young people is high but reductions have taken place at a faster rate than the national average. However, there remains a marked gap from that achieved nationally by children and young people. The local authority and PCT have targeted actions, which include the implementation of supervised tooth brushing coordinators working, for example, in children's centres, baby clinics, special schools and nurseries. These have yet to deliver the necessary results.

58. The CAMH service provides good support and there is good access to all of its services. Early intervention work has been facilitated by a wide range of staff who have received additional training in awareness of mental health and emotional well-being issues. In particular vulnerable groups such as looked after children, young offenders and children who misuse substances receive good support from the CAMHS teams.

59. Good multi-agency work targets children who undertake risk-taking behaviours; this will deliver improved outcomes for young people in the borough. A dedicated nurse works well with other agencies to ensure individual needs are met. All children who attend the accident and emergency unit are appropriately screened and information forwarded to the drugs and alcohol team and school nurses who then provide individualised support and education to the child.

60. Outreach health promotion and education for looked after children is good. The KATY project has been running for nine years and delivers a good programme for looked after children within which health is well integrated.

61. There is good health promotion for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and particularly good practice is found in special schools where there is a strong emphasis on healthy eating. Children are also supported well to participate in healthy activities both in the school and in the community during the day.

<b>Major strengths</b>	<b>Important weaknesses</b>
<p>Good reduction in teenage conceptions.</p> <p>Improved outcomes for women suffering from postnatal depression.</p> <p>Good sexual health education and advice provided by the THINK clinic.</p> <p>La Leche peer support programme.</p> <p>Use of the screening tool for substance misuse.</p>	<p>High levels of dental decay in children and young people.</p>

## Service management



## Capacity to improve



62. **The management of services for children and young people is adequate. Capacity to improve further is good.** The 2006 APA judged service management to be good and capacity to improve as excellent. The joint area review highlighted that some systems and processes, particularly regarding social care, were not as robust in practice as previously considered. However, capacity of the partnership to improve is good. The link between the partners' ambition and the wider vision of the council to improve people's lives is clear. The well-managed Change for Children programme supports practical delivery of the ambition for the area. A high level of integration with the PCT is improving health services for children and young people. The Building Schools for the Future programme is integral to wider plans for social regeneration. There is effective and stable senior leadership and a well motivated and knowledgeable lead member. Work is in progress to strategically direct resources to priorities, to improve commissioning and to develop the children's workforce. The council has demonstrated that it can take quick and decisive action where underperformance is highlighted, for example in responding to leadership and management issues in the youth service.

63. The council and its partners share and demonstrate good ambition for children and young people in Knowsley. This is largely based on good analysis of data, with local needs well understood. The 2006/07 Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and the draft plan for 2007-2010 contain a good balance of national and local priorities. There are good links between the CYPP, the Local Area Agreement and the council's corporate plan. The plan contains actions that directly contribute to the Local Strategic Partnership's (LSP) priorities of reducing anti-social behaviour, increasing the numbers of young people who stay on in education, training or go into employment, and tackling worklessness.

64. There is a well managed Change for Children programme which underpins the delivery of the CYPP, including projects on future workforce development and creating vibrant new learning environments with integrated services. Creating the ambition and vision for the future schools programme has been a

very inclusive process. Stakeholders have received good training to understand how the building design will impact on the learning experience, and will be involved in the evaluation of the design brief.

65. Prioritisation is adequate. The rationale for, and choice of, priorities included in the 2006/07 CYPP and the draft 2007/10 plan are understood by partners, councillors and staff, and young people have been engaged in determining them. Other partners were engaged through a series of workshops and consultations. The priorities are mostly underpinned by realistic and challenging targets, although some current levels of performance need to be established in the first year of the new plan, for example the percentage of children living in relatively low income or workless households and the take-up of sporting opportunities by 5–16 year olds. The council is developing local intelligence at the level of individual households to target its work with individuals and families who have some very entrenched and often multiple difficulties.

66. Plans to deliver the priorities are variable. The Change for Children programme contains many important projects to deliver the priorities, including implementation of the Common Assessment Framework and joint commissioning. These projects are well managed, with regular progress reports on time, cost and delivery. However, many underpinning strategies are still in draft or developing, for example, the Children Looked After Strategy and the Parenting Strategy. Supporting action plans are also of variable quality. Many have gaps in relation to specific actions and resources needed to deliver the priorities, and there is a lack of clarity about outcomes leading to difficulty in evaluating success.

67. The strategic approach to equality and diversity across the partnership is not sufficiently explicit. The CYPP and the Children and Young People's Executive meetings have limited reference to, and actions to promote, equality and diversity. At operational level, there is some good preventative work undertaken, mainly in schools, including awareness of homophobic and racial bullying. However, there are no specific actions relating to equality and diversity in the youth service business plan. The new participation standards are intended to ensure services are responsive to the needs of all children and young people, and the first service accreditations are due to take place in December 2007.

68. The Financial Framework for partners has been developed and this is a good starting point for aligning partnership resources. Funding for the Knowsley Safeguarding Children Board was agreed using this framework. Partnership resources were refocused to good effect in the 14–19 provision review. There is also evidence of some resources being shifted to support priorities. However, resources are not currently aligned to the priorities in the 2006/07 CYPP. Specific services and projects supported by Neighbourhood Renewal funding and other time limited funding are being reviewed to better align resources, in particular to preventative services. The partnership is updating its knowledge

about the total resource being deployed in delivering children's services. Much is invested in existing staff and services, so the ability to achieve large-scale pooling of resources is currently restricted, although partners work effectively and flexibly in directing non-cash resources to priorities.

69. Capacity to deliver priorities is good. The partnership has moved effectively from the consultative board to a decision-making executive and voluntary and community sector representation has been enhanced. The new Directorate of Children's Services (DCS) structure provides clear leadership, with most key appointments confirmed. The Director and other senior officers show effective leadership within the partnership, and the lead member, although new to the role, is knowledgeable. He is discharging his role effectively, supported by other portfolio holders in health and social care, housing and leisure in covering the five outcome areas.

70. Overall the DCS and the Directorate of Health and Social Care have the people and skills they need, with few capacity gaps, although some social workers report being overwhelmed due to pressure of workloads. Social work and teacher vacancies are low and sickness absence is decreasing. The council's integrated workforce strategy has been drafted, and the DCS is piloting and evaluating a career grade and training programme for children's services workers with two local universities. Workforce modelling is underdeveloped, although training and development, including for foster carers, is well planned and received. Increasing the number and training of lead practitioners is a stated priority to make further progress in implementing the Common Assessment Framework.

71. There is a well-established Health and Well-being Partnership comprising adult and children's social care and primary care services. Commissioning for health and some individual social care placements is well established within this partnership, and several posts are jointly or tripartite funded. Wider commissioning across the partnership is less well developed, particularly for universal services. A new commissioning framework has been agreed between partners, but the approach is not yet fully operational. Additionally, the capacity of the voluntary and community sector is limited. The new framework for commissioning has been developed and investment has been made in a new appointment to progress this area of work.

72. Financial management is good and value for money is improving. There has been a good record in delivering balanced budgets, and success in reducing the number of out-of-borough placements. A high proportion of children in care are looked after in foster care placements and Knowsley's relative unit costs are very good. The 14–19 review led to better value for money in work experience placements.

73. Performance management is adequate. Performance indicator based performance management frameworks are mostly good in design, although their impact is less good, for example over half of LAA indicators were

off target at the end of 2006/07, with more than a third deteriorating. The Director of Children's Services is accountable to the Chief Executive. The Performance Management Group review detailed information on behalf of the Children and Young People's Executive, who generally note the reports. There is an established system of reporting to the Local Strategic Partnership, portfolio holders and scrutiny, as well as to management teams, with some examples where intervention has been made to improve outcomes, for example improving health checks for looked after children. Scrutiny is mostly effective, and has recently added a review on attendance to its programme. Most staff report that supervision happens and is valued, but for a few it is regularly cancelled due to work pressures.

74. The inclusion of children and young people in performance management is developing but at an early stage. Children and young people are involved in the governance of the Children and Young People's Executive, and there are many examples of good consultation. Participation standards give young people a key role in the performance management of services, and the first accreditations are due to take place in December 2007.

75. There has been a lack of management oversight and quality assurance of some children's social work case files. The use of audit as a performance improvement and quality assurance tool is weak. Monitoring of action plans and some service areas has not been robust, for example there has been ineffective monitoring of the performance, management and leadership of the youth service and aspects of the Youth Offending service. Softer intelligence regarding complaints is not aggregated at Directorate level. Some underperformance was not identified or addressed quickly enough, for example in educational attainment.

<b>Major strengths</b>	<b>Important weaknesses</b>
<p>Change for Children programme management.</p> <p>Inclusive approach to Building Schools for the Future, links to social regeneration and plans for neighbourhood working.</p> <p>Focused Children and Young People's Executive and Children and Young People's Plan.</p> <p>Involvement of children and young people in governance arrangements.</p> <p>Stable and effective senior leadership and a knowledgeable lead member.</p>	<p>Strategic approach to equality and diversity not sufficiently explicit.</p> <p>Resources not yet aligned to priorities, particularly for preventative services.</p> <p>Quality of action planning.</p> <p>Narrow approach to performance management.</p>



## Annex A

### ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE KNOWSLEY

The joint area review of children's services in Knowsley was carried out in June 2007 and drew upon the findings of the 2006 Annual Performance Assessment. These findings are summarised below.

#### Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded
The contribution of the <b>local authority's children's services</b> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	4
The council's overall <b>capacity to improve</b> its services for children and young people	4

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council delivers well above minimum requirements for children and young people. The council was awarded Beacon Status last year for integrated children's services and has continued to benefit from exceptionally high levels of integration across this area of its work. The council has demonstrated continuous and sustained improvement across a range of services and performance measures that show it is continuing to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people.

The full annual performance assessment can be found at:

[http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=71165&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa\\_2006\\_340.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=71165&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa_2006_340.pdf)

## Annex B

### CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Outcomes for children and young people in Knowsley are generally good. The 2006 APA reported that Knowsley Council delivers well above minimum requirements for children and young people. The report stated that the council demonstrated continuous and sustained improvement across a range of services and performance measures for children and young people. However, the additional depth of on-site investigations during the 2007 joint area review highlighted that some systems and processes, for example management oversight of social care case files, were not as robust in practice as previously considered.

2. Children and young people in Knowsley have good opportunities to improve their health and well-being as services target their specific needs. Arrangements for safeguarding children and young people are adequate and there is some good work to improve children's safety. Teachers, health visitors and police officers give this high priority and ensure that children know what to do if they need help and assistance. However, there is variable quality of social work practice, and in some cases there was a lack of managerial oversight and quality assurance of case files. Agencies generally work well to meet the needs of looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and these children benefit from the skilled care they provided. Educational outcomes for children and young people are adequate. Children and young people are actively encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting their communities. Consultation is effective and inclusive and there is active involvement in school councils, the Youth Forum and the Youth Parliament. Children and young people are well supported to achieve economic well-being.

3. The APA in 2006 reported an excellent contribution by the council to health outcomes for children and young people. The 2007 joint area review into health inequalities found that long-term programmes are generally returning good outcomes for children and young people. However, more effective work is required to improve children's oral health. There are good, well-targeted health visitor services, accessible in a variety of settings, providing preventative and family support care to families in Knowsley. Good focused action is taking place to reduce obesity in families and children, and all pre-school children have access to milestone checks through the health visiting service. There is good work by the THINK clinics, which deliver a wide programme of health promotion and are well regarded by young people who frequently access their services. Good progress has been made in reducing teenage conceptions.

4. The council's contribution to outcomes in staying safe was reported to be excellent in the 2006 APA. This was due to the range of positive contributions by agencies, aimed at improving the safety of children and young people. The 2007 joint area review found that there is some good multi-agency work to tackle some of the wider safeguarding issues in the community, including prevention and targeted responses to bullying, in and out of schools, and in relation to hate crime. Safe lifestyles are promoted particularly well for looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, at the time of this inspection, the quality of services for the most vulnerable was inconsistent. The approaches to identifying and assessing risk for some children and young people are insufficiently robust, and there was a lack of managerial oversight and quality assurance of some case files.

5. In 2006, the APA judged the contribution of children's services to improving educational achievement as good. However, overall standards in 2006 dropped from those in 2005, and the rate of progress from one key stage to the next was below or well below the national average. Standards overall at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 are below or well below national averages. Targeted action at Key Stage 4 has resulted in improving outcomes over the last four years. There has been a recent improvement in numbers of looked after young people obtaining one A\*–G grade at GCSE, and this increased from 40% in 2005 to 59% in 2006. Poor levels of attendance for a few young people continue to cause concern. Individualised learning is used effectively to enable most young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make good progress. Schools are provided with good quality support with a clear focus on improving teaching and learning. Schools are now being challenged to set higher level targets for achievement in order to increase the pace of improvement. This places the local authority in a good position to bring about more rapid and sustained improvements in educational outcomes for children and young people.

6. The combined work of all services in helping children and young people to contribute to their communities is good. All groups of children and young people are encouraged strongly to participate in decisions that affect them. They contribute well to the Children and Young People's Executive Board meetings and are able to influence decision making. There is good representation on the Youth Forum and the Youth Parliament, including the more vulnerable groups of children and young people. Young people gain a great deal from the four area youth forums, which provide representatives to the Youth Parliament. Looked after children have effectively contributed to the local participation standards and they are appropriately represented on the Children and Young People's Forum. The inspection of the youth service reported that targeted street work is of good quality and responsive to incidences of anti-social behaviour in most areas of the borough. Multi-disciplinary 'Hustle' initiatives, involving youth workers, are providing effective diversionary activity for large groups of young people at weekends.

7. Children and young people are well supported to achieve economic well-being. The 2006 APA reported that the high quality partnership that exists between the council, the local Learning and Skills Council and Connexions is constructive and ensures that there is a wide range of suitable courses for young people. The 2007 joint area review found that there is a wide range of activities for young people aged 14–16 through the college, work-based learning providers and the specialist college collegiate. Multi-agency planning for care leavers is effective; all have pathway plans and a high number contribute actively to these. High quality work has enabled all care leavers to enter education, employment and training in 2006 and, at the time of this review, 93% of this group remained involved. There is a good choice of accommodation for care leavers. Success rates for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have improved and were significantly above national rates in 2006 through the Quality Assurance Framework and the outreach services

8. The 2006 APA judged service management to be good and capacity to improve as excellent. The 2007 joint area review, however, found that some systems and processes were not as robust in practice as previously considered. There is effective and stable senior leadership and a well-motivated, knowledgeable lead member. The 2006/07 Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and the draft plan for 2007-2010 is understood by partners, councillors, staff and young people. Work is in progress to strategically direct resources to priorities, and to improve commissioning. However, plans to deliver the priorities are variable and monitoring of action plans and some service areas has not been robust. For example, there has been ineffective monitoring of the performance, management and leadership of the youth service and aspects of the Youth Offending service.

9. Capacity to improve further is good. The council and its partners share and demonstrate good ambition for children and young people in Knowsley. This is largely based on good analysis of data, with local needs well understood. The partnership has moved effectively from the consultative board to a decision-making executive, and voluntary and community sector representation has been enhanced. A high level of integration with the Primary Care Trust is improving health services for children and young people. The well-managed Change for Children programme supports practical delivery of the ambition for the area.

## Annex C

### SUMMARY OF JOINT AREA REVIEW AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS

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

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

3. This review describes the outcomes achieved by children and young people growing up in Knowsley 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 and 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).