



# Joint area review

Hounslow children's services authority area

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**Better  
education  
and care**

## Review of services for children and young people

Adult Learning Inspectorate  
Audit Commission  
Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)  
Healthcare Commission  
HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate  
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary  
HM Inspectorate of Court Administration  
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## Introduction

1. This joint area review was conducted using the arrangements required under section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It was carried out by a multidisciplinary team of 10 inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), the Healthcare Commission (CHAI) and the Audit Commission. The review was undertaken according to the requirements of the *Framework for the inspection of children's services*.
2. The review was linked to the contemporaneous corporate assessment of the local council by the Audit Commission and its findings are represented in the relevant part of the corporate assessment report. It also drew on the findings of the contemporaneous inspections of the youth service and the Youth Offending Service (YOS).
3. This review describes the outcomes achieved by children and young people growing up in the Hounslow area and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being. Joint area reviews focus on the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and are well prepared to secure economic well-being.
4. The review evaluates the collective contribution made to each outcome for children and young people by relevant services in the area. It also judges the contributions made by the council's services overall and, specifically, its education and children's social care services. Particular attention is given to joint action by local services on behalf of those groups of children and young people who are vulnerable to poor outcomes. Two such groups are covered in detail: children and young people who are looked after by the council; and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
5. The review took place in two stages consisting in total of three weeks over a six-week period. The first stage reviewed all existing evidence including:
  - a self-assessment undertaken by local public service providers
  - a survey of children and young people
  - performance data
  - the findings of the contemporaneous inspection of the youth service
  - planning documents
  - information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day-care provision
  - findings from the inspection of the Youth Offending Team (YOT)
  - briefings from staff within inspectorates, commissions and other public bodies in contact with local providers

6. The second stage included inspection fieldwork. This included studies of how far local services have improved outcomes for a small sample of children and young people, some of whom have the most complex needs, and a study of provision in the Bedfont and Brentford areas of Hounslow. It also included gathering evidence on 10 key judgements, selected because of their critical importance to improving outcomes for children and young people in the local area. This included discussions with elected members of the local authority and their equivalents in other public agencies, officers from these agencies, service users and community representatives.

## Context

7. Hounslow is an ethnically diverse outer-London borough situated to the west of central London and covering an area of 56km<sup>2</sup>. It has a population of around 212,000 living in 83,000 households. Just under 20% of the population is aged between 0 and 15 years and 35% of the population is from Black and minority ethnic (BME) communities. Over 120 languages are spoken in the borough. Hounslow has seen a significant increase in the number of asylum-seeking children and young people for whom it is responsible. Hounslow is also host to the Feltham Young Offender Institution, the largest young offenders' prison in Europe. Of the 330 children and young people who are in the care of the local authority, over 60% are placed outside the borough.

8. The borough has areas of relative deprivation, such as Feltham, and areas of affluence in the north and east of the borough, such as Chiswick. According to official figures, Hounslow ranks 102nd most deprived of 354 councils. There is low unemployment at 2.9%, but there are many low-skilled workers and average household incomes and wages are low relative to most other London boroughs. Although the borough has some major businesses such as GlaxoSmithKline, BSkyB and BAA, local businesses report widespread skills shortages and many of Hounslow's residents lack the qualifications and skills required by the more prosperous employers. These include Heathrow airport which is situated directly on Hounslow's west boundaries.

9. The Labour-led council formally set up the new integrated department for children's services and lifelong learning in December 2005 under the leadership of the director of children's services and lifelong learning. It has developed a local 'Change for Children' programme to improve integration with its partners. The Children and Young People's Partnership Board includes the borough council, the Hounslow Primary Care Trust (PCT), the Hounslow police force and a range of voluntary and community bodies. It is led by a management board on which the major bodies are represented.

10. The council works with an increasing range of partners in the delivery of services to children and families. These include:

- Hounslow PCT, which commissions secondary healthcare and provides primary and community healthcare. The other major NHS

partners are West Middlesex University Hospital (WMUH) and West London Mental Health Trust

- West Thames College, which provides further education and vocational opportunities at Key Stage 4
- Hounslow Police, which has developed close and effective links with schools in the borough
- London West Learning and Skills Council, which leads on the provision of education and training for young people aged 16 years and over
- Community Initiative Partnership, which delivers leisure and recreational services including libraries under contract to the council
- a wide range of voluntary organisations, some of which are contracted to deliver specific services.

11. There are 60 maintained primary schools including 15 infant and 15 junior schools, 14 secondary schools, five special schools, and one primary and one secondary pupil referral unit. London West Learning and Skills Council has partnership agreements with the local authority, the college, local work-based learning providers and schools to address the 14–19 strategy. Post-16 education and training is provided by West Thames College and 14 sixth forms. Apprenticeships for Hounslow young people are provided by three work-based training providers based in Hounslow and over 70 others based in the region. Education to Employment provision is managed by Hounslow local authority, controlling 72 places. Adult and community learning including family learning is provided by Hounslow adult and community education department.

## Summary report

### Outcomes for children and young people

12. **Outcomes for most children and young people in Hounslow are good.** Overall, most children and young people are healthy and safe and those most at risk are well protected. Potential poor health outcomes in adulthood, for example obesity and inactivity, are addressed well through health education initiatives for children and young people. Most children and young people behave responsibly and many contribute very positively to school life and to their communities. The educational standards for children and young people up to the age of 19 have improved considerably in the last three years. They are now broadly in line with national standards. However, some groups do not yet achieve as highly as others, particularly white working-class boys and Somali pupils. Most children looked after by the council and those with learning difficulties or disabilities achieve well and many make good progress from their starting points. However, young people leaving the care of the council often do so without good GCSEs. Most young people are prepared well for working life

and the proportion staying on into training and education post-16 is above the national average. An increasing number is undertaking work-based training.

## The impact of local services

### Being healthy

13. **The work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good.** A range of services meets most of the physical and mental health needs of children and young people well, including those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or are looked after by the local authority. Parents and carers are supported in their parenting by a number of partnership initiatives, including Sure Start, and by the provision of good maternity services. Schools are actively involved in promoting healthy lifestyles through personal social and health education programmes, healthy eating initiatives and a range of physical activities. The youth counselling service, with close links to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is available in all secondary schools. The youth offending service collaborates well with local PCTs and the Hounslow young people's substance misuse service.

14. Access to health provision is supported by locating services within the community, for example young people's sexual health clinics which are held after school hours in a range of settings. The health needs of Hounslow's diverse community are recognised and met well. There is ready access to interpreting services where English is not the first language. Some partnerships aimed at supporting health outcomes for children and young people are highly effective, for example those for looked after children and young people. However, other partnership ventures are hampered by a lack of staffing or resources. The monitoring of care standards for looked after children and young people placed out of the borough, or placed in the borough by another authority, lacks rigour.

### Staying safe

15. **The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good.** Children and young people assessed as most at risk are protected through good interagency collaboration and through the management of good child protection services. Assessments of risk are timely and the quality of assessment, planning and reviews are good. The social care services at Feltham Young Offender Institution have strong links and access to services in the local area.

16. The vast majority of children and young people surveyed and interviewed feel safe living in their area. Agencies are working well together, raising awareness of personal safety in schools and youth services. All schools have anti-bullying strategies and mechanisms for recording racist incidents. The Area Child Protection Committee (ACPC), which had good representation from all agencies, has handed over its function to the Local Children's Safeguarding Board. Children's safeguarding policies are available in all agencies; they are

comprehensive and consistent with guidance and legislation. Actions taken to stabilise the staffing in social care settings have been effective. Vacancy and turnover rates have been considerably reduced in a relatively short period. Workers in all agencies have access to good training, supervision and support from their managers. The joint working arrangements with adult services are good, but there is a need to ensure that joint training courses are consistently available to staff.

17. The auditing of child protection thresholds by the social care child protection team is rigorous and most referrals are timely and appropriate. There is, however, a need to further improve the understanding among all agencies of the threshold criteria for accessing social care services so that all referrals are consistent, appropriate and of a high quality. There are very good efforts to engage children, young people and families in receipt of social care assessment services in evaluating those that they receive. Statutory and voluntary-sector services regularly provide family support services to address the needs of children and young people following assessment, so reducing the need for children to be looked after and placed on the child protection register. However, equal access to these early intervention services for children in need is not guaranteed in all parts of the borough.

### **Enjoying and achieving**

18. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good.** Improving outcomes for children and young people is a key priority for the local authority and its partners. The authority has a long-established record of providing early education and childcare to help give children a good start. The quality and amount of provision are improving. There are enough free nursery and childcare places for all 3 and 4 year olds whose parents request one. Most schools perform at least adequately and often well. None are identified by Ofsted to require special measures. Leadership and management in schools are often good or better. The authority provides effective support for national strategies to improve performance in core skills. It also strikes a good balance between support and challenge to ensure schools help children achieve well. Standards of achievement for children and young people have risen across all key stages, often at a greater rate than nationally and from a lower starting point. The progress of the majority of children looked after by the council and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities accessing provision in the borough is good and at least in line or slightly better than that found nationally and in similar areas. However, young people leaving the care of the council at age 16 often do not achieve five good GCSEs. Education and training for young people who offend is good.

19. Overall attendance rates are above national figures and authorised absence rates have fallen; where there are areas of concern, successful action takes place. Outcomes from inspections indicate that schools are becoming more inclusive; however, despite recent improvements, too many pupils are



permanently excluded from secondary schools. The provision offered to these pupils does not always provide them with their full educational entitlement. Too many excluded pupils with special educational needs are educated out of the borough.

### **Making a positive contribution**

**20. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good.** Services are effective in helping children and young people to develop socially and emotionally. They are well supported to develop positive relationships and are actively encouraged to accept responsibility. The majority contribute to decision-making locally and some help the council make decisions. However, not all groups are fully represented and consultation with those who have learning difficulties is not coordinated effectively. The council and voluntary groups provide good support to children and young people who are experiencing difficulties, particularly with regard to sexual health, drugs and self-harm. The Connexions service gives good support through personal advisers. The consultation with children and young people who are looked after by the council is outstanding. In areas where anti-social behaviour is a problem, preventive strategies have been successful and youth crime figures are decreasing. Work with children and young people who offend is encouraging and takes account of the diversity of the population. However, this work is not sufficiently informed by the assessment of risk of the harm to others posed by young people.

### **Achieving economic well-being**

**21. The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good.** In Hounslow young people are prepared well for working life. The borough is particularly effective in engaging large employers with training to support growth in the local economy. Post-16 success rates continue to rise although A-level success is still below average. All schools participate in work-related learning and, although participation in work-based learning is low, it is improving. The number of young people not in education, employment or training is low and falling further. Effective collaboration between learning providers has enhanced quality and choice for young people and well-resourced work-based learning provision boosts employment opportunities in the area. Young people receive well-coordinated advice, guidance and support through the Connexions service. Most disabled young people receive good training and support but some are not sufficiently monitored or have limited choices. Particularly good family learning develops parents' skills and supports children's learning despite some resource issues. Provision for housing is satisfactory and improving.

### **Service management**

**22. The management of services for children and young people is adequate. The capacity of the council to improve further is good and that of the local area, working with the council, is adequate.** In recent

years the effective leadership of the education and social care services in Hounslow has supported significant improvement in outcomes for children and young people; the council's capacity to continue to improve further in these areas is good. The overall management of children's services in the local area is currently adequate. The recent move to an integrated children's services department in the council, working closely with the Children's Partnership Board has given impetus to developments in the local area. The ambition for children and young people in the area is good. However, while there is good understanding and commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people, the vision and plans for children's services as a whole have yet to be drawn together in a coherent way. A comprehensive needs analysis is underway which will form the basis of the Children and Young People's Plan, but this is at an early stage of development.

23. Prioritisation is adequate. Partners know in broad terms what priorities are to be addressed and the council has made positive steps to identify and target services for children who are experiencing disadvantage in a range of ways. However, the restructuring of children's services is at an early stage and the alignment of budgets to needs-based priorities has yet to take place. While education and social care have good systems for monitoring budget expenditure, strategic financial planning is less well developed and plans for the ongoing funding of some projects are not transparent.

24. Overall capacity is adequate. Partnership working is generally positive and the Children's Partnership Board is making steady progress in defining its role and functions. The newly appointed director of children's services is in the process of setting up the structures and plans to take forward the new department. Significant steps have been made to address workforce gaps particularly for social workers and headteachers. Staff shortages remain in health, particularly for health visitors and school nurses. Overall, the council provides adequate value for money.

25. Performance management arrangements are adequate. Within the council good use is made of the corporate performance management framework to track progress against performance and identify areas for improvement. A range of consultation events is organised to involve young people; children and young people looked after by the council contribute to the review of performance, but this has not yet been extended more widely. Performance management by the Children's Partnership Board, including review mechanisms for wider outcome measures for children and young people, is still to be determined.

## Grades

Grades awarded:

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

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

## Recommendations

### For action over the next six months:

- Establish a robust system to monitor the quality and equity of health provision for all looked after children who are resident in, or responsible to, Hounslow.
- Improve the understanding of thresholds for referral to social services by schools and health professionals.
- Address the gaps in the preventive and family support provision for children in need.
- Improve the provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities by:
  - improving work-based learning provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are over 16 and ensuring that their progress is monitored
  - reducing the numbers educated out of the borough.
- Reduce the number of permanent exclusions in secondary schools and ensure that those excluded can access appropriate provision.
- Increase the participation of all children and young people in decision-making including their involvement in strategic planning and review.
- Establish a strategy to improve the recruitment and retention of health visitors and school nurses.
- Improve the management of children's services by:
  - ensuring that a comprehensive analysis of need informs the Children and Young People's Plan
  - engaging all partners in the strategic planning for services for vulnerable children and young people
  - improving the transparency of financial planning
  - developing mechanisms to enable the Children and Young People's Partnership Board to regularly monitor outcomes for children across the area.

## Main report

### Outcomes for children and young people

26. **Outcomes for most children and young people are good.** Overall, most children and young people are healthy and safe and those most at risk are well protected. Most children and young people behave responsibly and many contribute very positively to school life and to their communities. The educational standards for children and young people up to the age of 19 have improved considerably in the last three years. They are now broadly in line with national standards. However, some groups do not yet achieve as highly as others, particularly white working-class boys and Somali pupils. The standards achieved by looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good and many make good progress. Most young people are prepared well for working life and the proportion staying on into training and education post-16 is above the national average. An increasing number is undertaking work-based training.

27. **Most children and young people are and feel healthy.** The percentage of babies born with a low birth weight is lower than average and the proportion of expectant mothers who smoked during their pregnancy is lower than the England average and reducing. More babies are initially breastfed than is average. Perinatal and infant mortality rates are slightly lower than average. Take-up of childhood immunisation, with the exception of meningitis C, is good and the incidence of infectious disease is low. Hospital admission rates are low for respiratory and gastrointestinal infections and rates of admission for those with asthma are falling. Asthma rates in children are, however, higher than average.

28. Rates of teenage conception are similar to those found elsewhere and comparable with outer-London boroughs. Rates are falling but the incidence of chlamydia in 16–19 year olds is significantly higher than the England average. Teenage parents are well supported in improving their own health and enhancing their parenting skills so that outcomes for their own children improve.

29. The majority of children and young people surveyed understand how physical activity and good nutrition contribute to their health. Potential poor health outcomes in adulthood, for example obesity and inactivity, are being addressed well through the active promotion of healthy lifestyles in the vast majority of schools. Health outcomes for the refugee population benefit from a number of well-targeted initiatives including a directly managed general practitioner (GP) practice. Most children and young people looked after and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good healthcare. It is recognised that the health outcomes for young men in the Feltham Young Offender Institution are poor, particularly in the areas of dental, sexual and mental health.

**30. Children and young people appear safe and most feel safe.**

Children and young people are provided with a safe environment. The most vulnerable children and young people including those at greatest risk are well protected through good collaboration between agencies and well-managed procedures. Child protection is a high priority for all agencies, in line with the local area's Change for Children agenda. The proportion of initial and core assessments completed within timescales is above the national average, representing substantial improvement over the last two years; the proportion of re-referrals is below the national average. Although the proportion of children and young people on the child protection register is higher than the national average, the proportion of re-registrations is low. This is a good situation. The number of children and young people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents has reduced and is lower than the national average. Effective planning and review systems ensure that children and young people looked after receive good-quality care and support. The social care assessment and care management services for disabled children have recently been reorganised and have improved performance compared with two years ago. There are good arrangements for transition from children to adult services in place.

**31. The majority of children and young people achieve well.** They enjoy school and make good progress. A wide range of early years and childcare places are available to parents who require one. School inspections indicate that most schools perform well, leadership and management is good and often very good. No schools require special measures and only one remains in serious weaknesses. Most children and young people attend school and overall attendance is above national averages in secondary schools. Standards achieved by schools have improved over the last three years. In 2005, results for 7, 11 and 16 year olds were at least in line or slightly better than those in similar areas and those found nationally. The percentage of 16 year olds achieving higher GCSE grades has increased since 2002 from below the national average to above. Between 2002 and 2005 children in Hounslow also made better progress between the ages of 11 and 14 than in similar local authorities. 14 year olds now meet national standards in English but they achieve less well in mathematics and science. There are differences in the educational achievements of some groups, in particular those with Somali heritage, traveller children at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and white British boys. It should be noted, however, that traveller children achieved better results at Key Stage 4 in 2005. Boys achieve less well than girls at age 16 and also less well in English throughout their schooling. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who are looked after by the council make generally good progress from their starting points at ages 7 and 11 and at age 16. However, relatively few achieve higher subject grades and young people leaving the care of the council often do not achieve five good GCSE grades. Children and young people make good progress from Key Stages 1 to 2 and Key Stages 3 to 4. Although reducing, the number of pupils permanently excluded from secondary schools remains higher than national averages and those found in similar areas. There is very little permanent exclusion in primary schools.

**32. Children and young people receive a good range of opportunities to make decisions and take personal responsibility. Many make a good contribution to their local communities, but their contribution to strategic planning is at an early stage.** Children and young people represent Hounslow on national forums and, locally, they make a positive contribution through school councils and youth programmes. However, those with learning disabilities are not fully represented or adequately consulted. The majority of young people feel safe in their area, but some complain that street lighting is inadequate and this affects their willingness to participate in events at night. Most feel able to express opinions and feel their views are taken seriously. Looked after children make an outstanding contribution through their participation in training council staff. They have had a direct influence on the quality of council services. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are encouraged to participate in their reviews and are given extra support if necessary. However, their representation on all youth forums is not monitored and there is no strategy to ensure that they are adequately consulted on wider council decisions. A high proportion of those young people who have offended are placed in suitable education or training provision. The number of those offending is decreasing.

**33. Children and young people are able to achieve economic well-being and are prepared well for working life.** Young people benefit from the increasingly varied curriculum available to them from the age of 14 and through the good partnership between schools, the college and work-based learning providers. Success rates at GCE A level have improved significantly to just below national comparators. The proportion of young people continuing in education after the age of 16 is high, and their selection of chosen courses is improving. Participation in work-based learning is low, but success rates have improved radically and are now satisfactory in apprenticeships and good in Entry to Employment. Education and training opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good, with the exception of those for older learners.

## **The impact of local services**

### **Being healthy**

**34. The work of all local services in improving the health of children and young people is good.**

35. Most children have a good start in life. Maternity services, provided by West Middlesex University Hospital (WMUH), offer quality care and good outcomes for babies. They have retained a Charter Mark for excellence for a third consecutive time and are audited satisfactorily to National Service Framework targets. Breastfeeding rates are increasing, supported by a range of initiatives including a lead midwife for breastfeeding, a 24-hour helpline and a dedicated breastfeeding room in the special care baby unit. Smoking cessation programmes are available and the number of women who continue to smoke

during pregnancy is decreasing. Women with specific vulnerabilities, including those at risk of domestic violence, are identified early in their pregnancy and other agencies are mobilised as required.

36. Outreach antenatal clinics are provided specifically for teenagers. The Schooling, Welfare and Ante-Natal (SWAN) project provides good support to pregnant schoolgirls and school-age mothers in the borough. A partnership venture, it employs a multidisciplinary team to work directly with girls. There is a Boys 2 Men education service for teenage fathers. There is a very good range of initiatives to further reduce teenage pregnancies and improve sexual health. These include after-school young people's sexual health clinics held in a variety of community and hospital settings, a young person's genito-urinary clinic with counselling support and the Be Wize clinic, so named by local young people. This particular venture has received overwhelming endorsement from its service users. Web-based advice through the So Safe project tackles major health issues with children and young people. All schools comply with statutory requirements regarding sex and relationships education.

37. Children, young people and their parents and carers, generally receive good support and advice from universal services with additional support being offered to the most vulnerable. The health visiting and school nursing services are at present being reviewed with a stated aim of becoming a 0–19 service, capable of delivering against the broader public health agenda. However, there are vacancies in both services which, if not addressed, will seriously compromise service capacity. GPs provide a higher-than-average amount of child health surveillance and most offer health promotional activities. The oral health of children is average at age 14, but under-5s have significantly more decayed and/or missing teeth than found in other parts of England.

38. The Healthy Schools programme actively involves all but one of the primary/infant, secondary and special schools. This is supported well by the Food in Schools initiative. In both neighbourhoods visited during the review, most children participated in healthy lifestyle activities and knew what they needed to do to be healthy. Alive-and-kicking training, developed for local authority and PCT staff, targets lifestyle change for children and young people not participating in activities due to weight or health issues. School nurses play a key role in improving health outcomes for children; however, staffing vacancies in the school nursing team are limiting their capacity.

39. Partnership working with the voluntary sector has supported health education projects on, for example, sickle cell awareness and sexual health. The youth counselling service, acting closely with CAMHS, works in all secondary schools and in Feltham Young Offender Institution to provide individual support and counselling for young people. The youth service makes a significant contribution to improving health outcomes for its users through the adoption of the curriculum themes of healthy living, sports and outdoor entertainment, including the 900 young people who take part in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. The youth service supports Identity, a youth group



for lesbian, gay and bisexual young people, providing information, advice, guidance, training and resources to support a range of health initiatives including safer sex, eating disorders and substance misuse.

40. Improvements to the health of looked after children have been supported by good partnership working facilitated by a multi-agency steering group. Clear annual plans, informed by the healthy care standards for looked after children, are reviewed and monitored. Hounslow's young people who are placed in the borough are involved in identifying their own health needs through holistic assessment. The monitoring of care standards for looked after children and young people placed out of the borough or placed in the borough by another authority lacks rigour. While provision for the small number of individual cases examined during the review was good, no information is held to present the wider picture. This need has been recognised and an audit over a three-month period of health referrals for looked after children and young people was completed in March 2006. All looked after children and young people are provided with health information appropriate to their age including provision of a health CD-Rom and information in their own magazine. An interdisciplinary mental health team for looked after children provides effective specialist CAMHS services. Health awareness training is provided to new social workers and foster carers. Although children under 2 and children with respiratory problems are not placed with carers who smoke, there are no active plans to move towards a no-smoking policy for carers.

41. Secondary healthcare services for children are good. Excellent facilities are provided in a newly refurbished children's unit at WMUH which provides facilities for inpatients, a day unit and outpatient services including therapies. There are dedicated adolescent areas and the unit houses the children's home nursing service. WMUH paediatric accident and emergency (A&E) department is open 24 hours a day. Waiting times for children are longer than average although the numbers of children attending is rising. The unit is staffed by a number of qualified paediatric nurses, although not sufficient in number to provide 24-hour cover.

42. The new comprehensive partnership development strategy for mental health has been introduced recently and good progress has been made particularly in the provision of services for those children and young people with higher levels of need, including those who offend. Increased investment has been identified for adolescents, looked after children and disabled children with challenging behaviours. Mental health provision for young people in Feltham Young Offender Institution is poor, particularly the quality of care that is being provided to the small number of very seriously mentally ill young people who require constant observation. A review of specialist mental health provision is being conducted and mental health provision has attracted additional funding. The health needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are generally met well by the universal health services. There is currently no dedicated CAMHS for this group.

## Staying safe

### 43. The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good.

44. Children and young people assessed as most at risk are well protected through good, well-managed assessment and care management systems and processes. Significant improvements have been made to the referral, assessment and care management services following poor performance in this area three years ago. The capacity of the assessment and care management teams has been increased through additional management posts. A range of professionals from social care, health and education provide a timely service to children and young people showing good outcomes and positive impact. These services are effective at preventing children and young people from becoming looked after through good liaison with the statutory, voluntary and community services.

45. Case management is good. All cases are closely monitored and tracked throughout the child protection and looked after children systems. All child protection investigations are monitored by an independent child protection adviser to ensure a consistent quality and threshold for all children and young people across the local area. Concerns are addressed promptly and appropriately.

46. Interagency working and effective communication is leading to better outcomes for children and young people, for example links with the community mental health teams are established from the point of referral and enable workers to attend planning meetings for adults and for children and young people. A joint working protocol produced in September 2004 resulted in combined training courses for children and adult workers, which have since been incorporated in the current ACPC interagency child protection training programme.

47. Strategies to increase permanent staffing levels in social care teams have been very effective. There has been a significant reduction in vacancy levels since 2003 and a corresponding increase in service stability. However, some education and health professionals still perceive social care teams as understaffed and unresponsive. Social care workers report that they are well supported in undertaking their duties. Workers in health services, education and social care all have access to good child protection training and support from their managers. Social workers from abroad are given a robust initial induction programme that is supported by regular additional training. All incoming referrals are screened by a team of experienced, well-supported and supervised customer service officers. Management information is used well by managers to improve performance, services and outcomes for children and young people.

48. The two family support centres provide high-quality and flexible support to children and their families to prevent them from becoming looked after or placed on the child protection register. There are some early intervention

services for children in lower categories of need, but there are reported shortages in provision by professionals across all agencies. There are regular forums for voluntary organisations providing services to children and young people in higher need to discuss service delivery and the commissioning of services.

49. Voluntary organisations provide innovative services for children and young people from BME communities, including the East African youth service and Haaya, which supports Muslim girls and refugees and asylum-seekers. These services have strong links with schools, colleges and other partners and succeed in enabling children and young people to increase their confidence so that they feel safe and can maximise their life chances. While demand for these services is increasing, voluntary organisations report that communications with the council are not transparent and that they do not yet have a full understanding of the part that they will play in the new integrated children's services.

50. There are significant numbers of children placed with foster carers or in children's homes out of the borough. Strategies are now in place to address the proportion of out-of-borough placements, which include increasing the number of in-house foster placements. The local area is sensitive to the impact on its resources of continuing to place large numbers of looked after children and young people out of the borough. It is also mindful of the possible impact on children and young people themselves. Practice to support children and young people looked after by the local authority is sound and the percentage of looked after children and young people with three or more placement changes has consistently been low for a number of years. There have been significant increases in the number of children placed for adoption in recent years and these have been consistently higher than the national average. All children looked after by the council are allocated qualified social workers and 99% of statutory reviews take place within agreed timescales. Young people attend the meetings of the corporate parenting group and have significantly benefited from their delivery of the Total Respect programme. There is a dedicated child protection officer for all schools as well as a designated teacher for children looked after by the council and for children on the child protection register. A comprehensive training programme is in place for this group.

51. The Local Children's Safeguarding Board is established and will hold its first meeting in March 2006. The council reports that all staff have been checked for their criminal record and health services have in place the strategies to undertake retrospective checks. Multi-agency public protection arrangements to monitor serious offenders in the community are good. Representatives from all agencies attend child protection conferences. The ACPC and the council monitor performance rigorously and disseminate local and national findings at the annual conference. The social care child protection adviser is undertaking a small case file audit to understand local patterns regarding the incident of, and response to, cases of neglect on the child protection register. Contact with and training for GPs have been improved

through GP membership of the committee and the provision of child protection training at some surgeries and practices.

52. Services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been reorganised and have improved; they now provide better intervention aligned with mainstream provision. The voluntary organisation KIDS provides an information and support service to parents of such children. This service is highly regarded by parents.

53. The majority of children and young people surveyed report that they feel safe at school and in their community. All schools have anti-bullying procedures and all record racist incidents. In the council's 2004 schools survey of Year 6 and 7 pupils, approximately 70% reported that they had never been bullied at school. The Hounslow Youth Counselling Service provides excellent support to young people including young offenders at Feltham Young Offender Institution. Young people can self-refer to the service for support on any issues they are concerned with, from settling into school and making friends to bullying, harassment, self-harming and suicidal feelings. Approaches to addressing and raising awareness of domestic violence are impressive, and link well to safeguarding procedures. The Learn to Respect programme supports children and young people and their teachers through project work on domestic violence and the impact of violence. Children and young people report being able to talk about their experiences in a supportive environment, while teachers report that they are better able to identify children and young people in need and know better how to help them.

### **Enjoying and achieving**

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

55. Early years provision is comprehensive and expanding, including two recently opened children's centres and four neighbourhood nurseries. There are enough free nursery and childcare places for all 3 and 4 year olds whose parents request one. The partnership between agencies, nurseries and private and voluntary-sector providers is strong, and providers and practitioners are well monitored, challenged and supported. As a result, quality and standards are improving. Inspection judgments for nursery schools indicate that they are at least equal to or better than those nationally. The 'Hounslow development profile' for nurseries, which has been taken up by 85% of non-maintained settings, supports transition for children moving from setting to setting, into nursery or school. In 2005, more rigorous arrangements for moderating the Foundation Stage profile at the end of the Reception year resulted in a fall in the percentage of children achieving the highest levels. While this was expected, it was greater than the fall nationally.

56. Parents and carers are provided with a satisfactory range of impartial information and guidance to help their children enjoy and achieve well, both in the early years and in schools, particularly in areas of highest need. Parents report that the guidance and support at the time when their children move from one phase of education to another, such as from primary to secondary schools, is good.

57. The large majority of schools in Hounslow are good. Effective leadership and management are helping schools to raise standards of achievement for their pupils. The school improvement service provides good support and challenge to schools. There are currently no schools judged to require special measures and only one school is judged to have serious weaknesses. Elected members and senior managers in the council receive a detailed and clear annual report on the performance of schools and of specific groups of pupils. However, they do not receive information on the achievement and standards of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are educated in specialist provision within and out of the borough. Closer links need to be established between some schools and the YOS to better address the needs of children and young people who offend.

58. Pupils' school attendance is good and secondary attendance continues to be above national averages. The education welfare service has successfully used a variety of strategies to improve attendance in primary schools, where attendance rates have risen faster than nationally, while remaining slightly below national averages. Fast-tracked prosecutions are instigated where necessary. The service has also taken action to tackle the number of pupils taking holidays during term time each year and so reduce the amount of unauthorised absences. A rigorous system is in place to identify and locate young people who are not in school. It is coordinated by the senior education welfare officer, working in partnership with other services and agencies, including the YOT. The small numbers of children educated at home are regularly monitored and children educated in the local hospital receive a good service.

59. Professional services work well together to quickly identify and support pre-school children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A children and families centre provides good, specialist, high-quality cross-borough support and assessment. This approach, together with good-quality training, advice and guidance provided to school staff helps to meet individual needs and prepare young children for the next phase of their education. Most children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in schools within the borough receive good provision and support. The authority's inclusion strategy and guidance to schools on inclusive practice is good, and school inspections indicate that they are becoming more inclusive. However, too many children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are educated in special school provision outside the borough and the number of children who have statements of special educational need is higher than national averages. Additionally, too many pupils are permanently excluded from secondary schools, although the number is

reducing and the number of young people who attend full-time alternative provision once they are excluded is lower than national averages. Primary school pupils who are excluded are helped to get back into mainstream schools quickly. These factors indicate that the principles of inclusion are not yet fully embedded in all schools across the borough.

60. The inclusion service works hard to meet the individual needs of the most challenging pupils who are provided with individual packages of support which, in many cases, is building up to full-time provision. However, the local authority has not always been sufficiently focused on reducing the number of exclusions or out-of-borough placements for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or on building schools' capacity to meet the needs of all pupils. A strategy to delegate funding for pupils with low categories of special educational need, which has recently been consulted upon, aims to reduce the dependence of statements of special educational need. This, together with proposals to increase provision for children with complex needs within the borough, will support the wider aims of the inclusion policy. Specialist staff and workers within the YOT collaborate effectively to meet the needs of children and young people who offend.

61. Educational support for children looked after by the council is good, statutory responsibilities are carried out effectively and systems are in place to ensure all children have personal educational plans. Carers and young people are fully involved in their reviews. Effective procedures to monitor their attendance at school resulted in the record attendance figures in 2005. Agencies collaborate well to provide good support when young people move from each phase of school and, once they reach 16, into education, employment or training.

62. Hounslow plans and manages its own assets effectively and gives high-quality advice and guidance to headteachers and governors in managing theirs. The local authority works in partnership with its schools to reduce surplus places where possible. Procedures for admission to schools are good and priority is given to children who are looked after by the council.

63. The majority of children and young people are able to access a range of recreational and play activities. Pupils in the Brentford and Bedfont areas indicate that they have a good choice of recreational activity, although occasionally the cost of this provision can be prohibitive. Children and young people who attend the extended school in Bedfont have access to an impressive range of arts, leisure, sports and educational opportunities before and after school and during school vacations. Children looked after by the council are encouraged to take part in cultural and leisure opportunities, and they are provided with leisure passes. The leisure service provides a range of recreational and holiday activities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including access to a sensory unit called Reflections. Children educated out of the borough are also enabled to access provision during holidays. The borough's sports and recreation strategy includes aims to increase

participation by disabled people, but there has been no audit of current provision and no published targets for improving provision and access for children and young people with disabilities.

### **Making a positive contribution**

#### **64. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good.**

65. The local authority and its partners are highly effective in promoting children's and young people's personal, social and emotional development. In educational settings, peer mentoring and buddy support systems are well developed and high-quality training helps young people to develop confidence and skill in supporting one another. Learning mentors support children and young people very well and, in some schools, volunteers from local businesses make an important contribution. Innovative practice encourages children and young people to develop responsible attitudes. For example, a 'Meaningful Work' programme in one primary school in Brentford encourages children to apply for jobs for which they are then interviewed. If appointed, the children are given key responsibilities which they take very seriously; they speak with enthusiasm about the part they play in running their school.

66. The majority of children and young people are well supported in managing change and coping with difficult periods in their lives. The youth service makes a good contribution to this support through a range of projects targeted at vulnerable groups, and Connexions personal advisers provide specialist support for those children and young people who are looked after and those with a learning difficulty and/or disability. Over 90% of looked after children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, contribute to their reviews; support is provided for those who find this difficult. Where advocacy is provided for looked after children, they say that it empowers them to take full advantage of this opportunity to contribute to decisions which affect their lives.

67. Partnerships between the council and voluntary organisations help to support the most vulnerable young people in Hounslow. Asylum-seekers, who were interviewed in Bedfont, felt that they had been given help and encouragement. The support network KIDS provides one-to-one sessions and group outings for young carers. The SAFE project, run jointly by the youth service and the PCT, is increasing access to health support and counselling on a range of issues including sexual health, drugs awareness and self-harm.

68. At a local level children and young people's voices are heard through school councils, most of which work well. In the Brentford and Bedfont neighbourhoods, children described how they have directly influenced the range of healthy eating options available and, in one school, they are part of the group deciding on new contracts for the canteen. Young people contribute to the selection and appointment of staff in schools, the youth service and in residential settings. Two members of the youth council are elected annually to represent Hounslow on the UK Youth Parliament. Many, but not all, young

people take part in this process. Some pupils feel that they are not represented and that they have limited opportunities to give their views in the local area.

69. The council is committed to involving children and young people in decisions about issues that concern them. Many contributed to the draft participation strategy and their views are reflected in the overarching council priorities. The lead elected member for children is very proactive in raising the profile of children and young people, and the appointment of the children's champion has raised their profile across the council. In particular, young people who are members of the corporate parenting group make a positive difference to the experiences of looked after children and young people and, as a result, practice has changed. For example, suitcases have replaced bin liners for moving their possessions and they now have improved access to computers in residential homes. Young people also have opportunities to contribute more widely; they were part of the panel deciding on the Connexions bid and are members of a group designing a school-based health service; young people also influence the range and type of provision on offer within the youth service. It is recognised that their full strategic involvement across the area has yet to be developed.

70. Strategies to reduce anti-social behaviour have resulted in a reduction in youth crime, particularly in those areas which have been targeted. Very effective collaboration between Hounslow police and the council has led to initiatives, such as those to reduce non-attendance at school, which are monitored by the community safety group. The detached and outreach team coordinates individual support packages for young people, ensuring that anti-social behaviour orders are used only as a last resort. The YOS works effectively with young people on preventive activities. A football team of young men aged 16–19 from many communities play together as a sports and anti-racist team. The number of young people who are successfully re-engaged with education and training is higher than that found nationally.

71. The local authority is particularly innovative and effective in its consultation with and involvement of children and young people who are looked after by the council. A number of young people are trainers on the Total Respect programme, which provides training to members and officers and this approach has received national recognition. The quality of this training has made a significant impression on participants and it is an outstanding example of successful participation. The young people interviewed commented that now, '...everyone is listening to what we say'. They have also created a DVD, 'You are not alone', which provides excellent help and guidance for other children and young people coming into care for the first time. Young people also publish and edit *Chill out* magazine which provides a stimulating and entertaining source of information and advice, as well as a forum to share views and celebrate experiences.



72. There are some good examples of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities contributing to the planning of local provision, for example through an 'It's Your Say Day' where they gave their views on the redesign of the respite and short break centre on the Westamacott estate. However, a systematic approach to gathering their views is still at an early stage.

### **Achieving economic well-being**

#### **73. The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good.**

74. Young people are well prepared for working life through good work-related programmes and well-established links between schools and local businesses. Many young people benefit from the increased flexibility programme. Two schools run enterprise centres where young people manufacture and market their products. Approximately 400 pupils aged 14–16 participate in well-resourced work-based learning at the Feltham Skills Centre which provides particularly well-targeted provision in response to local needs. In addition to their core qualifications, they achieve a good range of certificates to enhance their employment prospects, for instance in health and safety. Young people on these programmes also improve in their attitudes to learning and make good progress. The Entry to Employment programme in nearby Feltham Community College makes good provision for disengaged 16–19 year olds through its newly developed apprenticeship schemes. However, young people in other parts of the borough do not have the same access to young apprenticeships.

75. Success rates for young people over the age of 16 have improved dramatically; 90% attend school or college. Good success rates at West Thames College have ranked it second of all London colleges. Enrolments at level 1 have increased by 30% although there is a slight reduction at levels 2 and 3. A-level students and those studying advanced vocational qualifications achieve below national standards despite considerable recent improvement in A-level performance. The number of young people not in education, employment or training is low and falling. However, of the 10% of young people who leave school to go directly into work, the majority are in jobs without training. Despite a dedicated resource, there has been limited success in engaging small, local employers in providing training for their staff. Participation in work-based learning is low.

76. Young people have good access to advice and guidance. The Connexions service, managed by the local authority, works closely and effectively with a wide range of agencies, including the YOT. Well-trained personal advisors in every secondary school and in the youth service and college provide good support for young people. Several projects have succeeded in re-engaging young people including a very popular Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Young people, including those within Feltham Young Offender Institution, have

ready access to advocacy and personal support from the Hounslow Counselling Service. Race equality schemes are in place in all schools.

77. The strategy for the 14–19 curriculum is based on a secure analysis of need, is clear and is understood by all partners. Progress towards full integration of post-16 services has accelerated, supported by enhanced and formalised collaborative planning between institutions and with work-based learning providers. Recognising the unevenness of quality in post-16 provision, the college and schools have pooled their strengths to minimise duplication while providing meaningful choice and parity of access for young people.

78. The education business partnership is particularly effective in engaging large employers to plan training to support growth in the local economy. Very good employer engagement with schools includes GlaxoSmithKline science days and CISCO telecommunications training and infrastructure. BAA is working with the council to develop new career paths for Hounslow residents at its well-equipped training centre, a centre of vocational excellence (CoVE) in retail. The West London Learning and Skills Council has set up effective provider networks that have enhanced the quality and breadth of programmes available to young Hounslow residents.

79. Families receive good support and have ready access to a wide range of childcare information in many forms. The childcare information service won a Sure Start award in 2005 for good practice in outreach, particularly with teenage parents. The supply of childcare places is satisfactory. Some areas of Hounslow have very low educational attainment among adults. Good family learning courses provide parents with enjoyable opportunities to develop their skills and support their children's learning. As a result of this training, some parents have become learning mentors and are training as teaching assistants. Many parents have progressed into mainstream education and employment. Grants are available for childcare, including the Care-to-Learn scheme, which allows many teenage mothers to return to study. However, there is concern among providers that national cuts in funding may limit progression routes for low-achieving adults.

80. Regeneration projects provide good training and employment for local people. Close cooperation with good work-based learning providers and employers underpins a very well-targeted strategy to prioritise vocational areas and develop new accreditation routes, for instance in modern construction methods. While the council consults formally with representatives of the voluntary sector, the outcomes are not always clearly conveyed.

81. Although the young people's housing strategy is not yet in place, arrangements for housing young people are satisfactory. All Hounslow homes will meet the decent homes standard by April 2006, four years ahead of the government's 2010 target. The council annually plans and allocates support for families and young people to transfer within social housing and its resettlement team supports homeless families for the first six months of tenancy. No family

is in temporary accommodation for more than six weeks. Numbers of homeless people in the borough have reduced from 268 in 2004 to 148 this year. Changes in procedure are providing better support to families to reduce the risk of homelessness. Suitable provision for young people including semi-independent housing is actively managed and more units are being built.

82. Increasing coordination between agencies provides integrated support to meet young people's needs. All secondary schools have a social inclusion panel which decides how support can be most appropriately offered in an integrated way, with a single point of contact for the young person. Clear protocols are in place to assess the risk to young people in the school against a range of factors including health, progress and family circumstances. All looked after children over 15 years of age have pathway and transition plans which they have been involved in drawing up and which are regularly reviewed. Care-leavers are encouraged to develop high aspirations, for example through the Aim Higher project, where young undergraduates who have been in care mentor looked after children to encourage them to apply for university. Personal and welfare support are available to looked after children aged 16–19 to support their education or training. There are close links between CAMHS and other services including Connexions, the counselling service and Jobcentre Plus. However, the links to adult mental health services are less strong.

83. Provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate. Transition arrangements are managed by a multi-agency approach which includes healthcare, education, social care and housing. However, the procedures to monitor the educational progress of disabled young people placed out of the borough are not always clear and options in education and training for seriously disabled people over the age of 18 are very limited.

### **Service management**

**84. The management of services for children and young people is adequate. The capacity of the council to improve further is good and that of the local area, working with the council, is adequate.**

85. The ambition of the council and its partners for children and young people, identified through the Community Strategy, Executive Business Plan, and the 2002–05 Children's Plan, is good. Collectively, these plans identify children and young people as a cross-cutting theme for the council and affirm the stated commitment by partners to work together. While the vision for children's services has yet to be formalised through one plan, it is well articulated and understood by council officers and elected members and by many who work in services for children.

86. Existing education and social care plans are based on an analysis of need, informed by good performance data. Improved education data supports the council in analysing and meeting the needs of different groups in the community. There is currently no overall map of service provision for children and young people across the council and its partners to inform future service

planning. A more comprehensive audit of need across all services will form the basis of the Children and Young People's Plan which is due to be published in April 2006 and formally ratified in May 2006. The plan will run initially for one year and will be followed in April 2007 by a three-year plan.

87. Prioritisation is adequate. Priorities for children and young people identified in the Executive Business Plan are understood by most staff and elected members. These priorities have informed service plans and are supported by information detailing the resource requirements to deliver actions. The quality of the outcome measures is however, variable. For example, while the Education Development Plan provides clear success criteria and an evaluation of achievement against these criteria, the Social Services and Health Business Plan describes achievements in process terms. The draft Local Area Agreement (LAA) identifies young people from 11 to 19 as a priority. These three plans provide a good basis on which to shape the delivery of priorities which will flow from the Children and Young People's Plan. However, the absence of an overarching plan for children means that at this stage, partners do not have a shared understanding of the detail of the priorities for children and how these will translate into action in the new integrated service. The alignment of budgets between education and social care is currently taking place to support the restructuring of children's services. However, financial planning is unlikely to be completed in sufficient time to inform the Children and Young People's Plan.

88. High priority is given to most equality and diversity issues and, in its service plans, the council has identified the areas where it needs to target its activities to improve outcomes for children experiencing disadvantage; these include improving educational attainment for white working-class boys and refugee children.

89. Partners have identified the provision of preventive services as a priority; plans are in place to develop a range of integrated services, including children's centres, extended schools and an integrated disabilities team. Most of these developments are at an early stage.

90. The track record of the council and its partners on achieving their priorities is good. Positive developments include: improvement in educational attainment including that for looked after children; a positive trend in reducing youth offending; a reduction in teenage pregnancy; and an effective youth service. However, the council and its partners recognise that there is further work to do to improve outcomes for certain groups of children and young people, for example access to work-related learning for young people over the age of 16. Interagency processes for planning and reviewing provision for vulnerable children are not fully coordinated at a strategic level, although the ACPC, now replaced by the Safeguarding Board, has worked well.

91. The current capacity of the local partnership's services to deliver better outcomes for children and young people is adequate. There is a strong culture of partnership working in Hounslow particularly with health, the police and schools. The Children's Partnership Board, established in April 2004, has representation from all key agencies; the principle of Children's Trust arrangements has been agreed, although the implications and impact of this for partners have yet to be determined. The involvement of the voluntary sector, particularly in relation to strategic planning, is less well developed. Partners are aware that further work is required to bring all staff on board and are running Change for Children stakeholder conferences to address this issue.

92. The council's contribution to the partnership's capacity is good. Senior officers and elected members of the council are firmly committed to improving services and to the development of an integrated children's service. The post of lead member for children is well established and the present portfolio holder discharges her functions effectively and with enthusiasm. The recent appointment of the director of children's services and lifelong learning has accelerated the work of the partnership; his role and those of the four assistant directors are being developed. Work is underway to integrate education and children's social services. However, this integration is at an early stage. The council has adopted a measured approach to the pace of change to protect the quality of the delivery of core services.

93. The council's use of resources is good. It has increased its allocation of financial resources to children's services in line with corporate priorities over the last three years. The council generally meets government expected spending allocations for education and in 2005–06 exceeded budget allocation for children's social services by 6.86%. While education and social care have good systems for monitoring budget expenditure, strategic financial planning is less well developed. Plans for the ongoing funding of some projects are not transparent and this leads to anxiety and uncertainty among staff involved with these projects, for example the sustainability of funding for detached youth worker posts.

94. Overall, the partnership provides adequate value for money. Most service costs are in line with those in similar authorities, but outcomes, especially in education and the youth service, are generally good. However, unit costs for looked after children exceed the average costs when compared with neighbouring boroughs. The council is aware of this and uses benchmarking information to track its progress in this area. Out-of-borough expenditure for both looked after children and special educational needs placements are leading to significant budgetary pressures for children's services. Further strategies for managing out-of-borough costs are being developed, including increasing the number of in-house foster carers so that more looked after children are placed within the borough. There are imminent plans to develop service level agreements with private foster care agencies, but strategies have not yet resulted in improved value for money.

95. The council has not entered into any formal pooled budget arrangements with the health sector. This reflects the current tight financial situation of the PCT which is £14m in deficit. Examples of jointly funded projects across agencies which are leading to improved outcomes for children and young people include: the SWAN project, a service providing support for teenage mothers; jointly funded Connexions posts; and a post to support the education of looked after children. The council recognises that joint commissioning is underdeveloped and plans to set up a joint commissioning team within the new performance projects and research division unit of the children's services department.

96. Council workforce strategies have led to significant improvements in the recruitment and retention of staff, resulting in a stable workforce in children's services. In addition, the quality and availability of relevant training for staff is good. While there have been successful initiatives to recruit social workers and teachers, the council recognises that longer-term workforce planning is required to ensure retention in those areas presenting the greatest challenge such as front-line social work managers. Within the health services there are staff shortages for health visitors and school nurses, but it is not clear what steps are being taken to address these shortages.

97. The management of performance in children's services is adequate. Within the council, good use is made of the corporate performance monitoring framework to track progress against key performance indicators. There is good reporting of performance on a quarterly basis at both service and executive member level. The children's champion and children's scrutiny panel also provide appropriate challenge to improve service delivery. Action is promptly taken to address areas of underperformance. However, performance information does not routinely contain information on financial implications and value for money. Children and young people are not involved formally and routinely in the performance management of services, although there are individual examples of good practice, for example the contribution of looked after children.

98. Performance management of services for children by partners at the Children's Partnership Board is in development. While performance reports on progress against the Change for Children targets are presented to the Board, mechanisms to review the wider outcome measures for children and young people are still to be determined.

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

1. Overall, the council is performing well in the provision of services for children and young people. Outcomes are good; overall, children and young people are healthy and safe and those most at risk are well protected. The council provides satisfactory value for money. Educational outcomes have improved significantly over the last three years and there has been good improvement in the quality of social care provision. The council's youth service is good. Young people who are looked after or in greatest need receive good care.

2. Children and young people are identified as a priority for the council in its executive business plan and community strategy for Hounslow and services for children and young people were restructured in December 2005 through the creation of the department for children and lifelong learning. While the ambitions with respect to the new service are clearly articulated by the council's senior officers and elected members, there is as yet no overarching shared view of priorities across services and partners. The existing plans for education and social care are detailed, but the Children and Young People's Plan, which will take forward the work of the new integrated department, is not yet published. The council takes the lead role on the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board which has recently agreed to move to Children's Trust arrangements. The Board is making steady progress in defining its role and functions as is the newly established director of children's services.

3. Management of the council's services for children is adequate. The capacity to improve is good. The council has increased its allocation of financial resources to children's services in line with corporate priorities over the last three years. While education and social care have good systems for monitoring budget expenditure, strategic financial planning is less well developed. Plans for the ongoing funding of some projects are not transparent. Council workforce strategies have led to significant improvements in the recruitment and retention of staff. Performance management is adequate; children and young people are not involved formally and routinely in the performance management of council services, although there are individual examples of good practice, for example for looked after children.

4. The council works well with its partners in promoting children's physical and mental health, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children looked after by the local authority. Parents and carers are supported in their parenting by a number of partnership initiatives including Sure Start and the development of children's centres. Schools are actively involved in promoting healthy lifestyles through personal, social and health education programmes, healthy eating initiatives and a range of physical activities. The youth counselling service, with close links to the CAMHS is available in all secondary schools.

5. On the evidence gathered by the joint area review, children and young people in Hounslow appear safe. Those assessed as most at risk are protected through good interagency collaboration and through the management of good child protection services. There is, however, a need to improve further the understanding among all agencies of the threshold criteria for accessing social care services. All schools have anti-bullying strategies and mechanisms for recording racist incidents. Overall, outcomes for looked after children are satisfactory; provision and support for this group are now good.

6. A high priority is placed by the council on ensuring that children and young people enjoy their education and achieve well. Provision for early years education is improving and increasing; there are enough free nursery and childcare places for all 3 and 4 year olds whose parents request one. Standards of achievement for children and young people have risen, often at a greater rate than nationally. The progress of the majority of children looked after by the council and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities accessing provision in the borough is good. However, young people leaving the care of the council at age 16 do not achieve five good GCSEs. Overall attendance and authorised absence rates are good and, where there are areas of concern, successful action takes place. Inclusive approaches are promoted by the local authority and inspections indicate that schools are becoming more inclusive; however, too many pupils are permanently excluded from secondary schools and too many pupils with special educational needs are educated out of the borough.

7. Council services are effective in helping children and young people to develop socially and emotionally. They are well supported to develop positive relationships and are actively encouraged to take responsibility. The majority contribute to decision-making locally and some do at council level, although there are fewer opportunities for them to contribute at strategic level. However, not all groups are fully represented and consultation with those who have learning difficulties is not coordinated effectively. In areas where anti-social behaviour is a problem, preventive strategies in partnership with the Hounslow police force have been successful in leading to a decrease in youth crime figures.

8. Opportunities for young people to prepare for working life are good. Post-16 success rates continue to rise although A-level success is still below average. The number of young people not in education, employment or training is low. Good skills training for young people responds well to local needs. Young people receive well-coordinated advice, guidance and support and provision for housing is satisfactory and improving. However, the most severely disabled young people have limited choices after the age of 16. Particularly good family learning develops parents' skills and supports children's learning.