



# Joint area review

Hillingdon children's services authority area

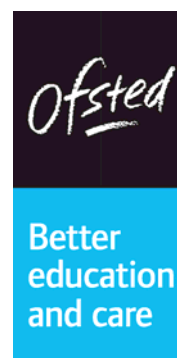
---

## Review of services for children and young people

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

Audience	Published	Reference no.
All	23 February 2006	312

---



---

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the local authority or at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

---

# Contents

	Page
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Summary report</b>	<b>6</b>
Grades	10
Recommendations	11
<b>Main report</b>	<b>12</b>
Outcomes for children and young people	12
Impact of local public services	14
Being healthy	14
Staying safe	16
Enjoying and achieving	18
Making a positive contribution	20
Achieving economic well-being	22
Service management	24
<b>Annex:</b>	
<b>The children's and young people's section of the corporate assessment report</b>	<b>28</b>

---

## 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 seven inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), the Healthcare Commission (CHAI), Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) 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 Offending Service (YOS) and the youth service.

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

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

6. The second stage included inspection fieldwork. This included studies of how far local services have improved outcomes for a small sample of children

and young people, some of whom have the most complex needs, and a study of provision in the large neighbourhood of Hayes and Harlington. It also included gathering evidence on nine key judgements, selected because of their critical importance to improving outcomes for children and young people in the local area. This included discussions with elected members of the local authority and their equivalents in other public agencies, officers from these agencies, service users, and community representatives. A review of case files for children and young people receiving support from a number of local agencies was also included.

## Context

7. Hillingdon is the second largest of the London boroughs and contains a mix of urban and rural areas. The main centres of population are Uxbridge, Hayes, Ruislip and West Drayton. It is well served by the M25, M4 and M40 motorways and has good rail links to the city and the east and west of the country. It is home to approximately 248,700 people. The population is culturally diverse, with approximately 21% from Pakistani and other Asian groups, and Black Caribbean or Black African groups. Most live in the southern part of the borough. No political party has overall control of Hillingdon Council, which delivers all the local authority services.

8. The borough has few areas of high multiple deprivation; however, one ward in the south of the borough is among the 20% most deprived wards in England (based on 2001 indices of multiple deprivation). The north of the borough is semi-rural, with a large proportion of greenbelt land and is less densely populated than the south, which has a more urban character and includes the highest proportion of housing. Fewer than 4% of Hillingdon residents are unemployed, compared with a London average of 7%. Many jobs are within the wholesale, retail and service industries and are low skilled and poorly paid.

9. Heathrow Airport is within the boundaries of Hillingdon and is the largest employer in the borough. Its location within the area places significant pressure on services for children and young people. The borough is responsible for large numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people, as well as those children who are felt to be in need or at risk as a result of assessments by staff at Heathrow.

10. The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board (CYPSPB) reports to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). It is chaired by the chief executive of the council and includes the borough council, the Primary Care Trust (PCT), the NHS Acute Trust, voluntary services, the Metropolitan Police force, Uxbridge College, Brunel University and the local learning and skills council. Council services are currently being restructured to meet the requirements of the Children Act 2004. The designate director of education and children's services, currently director of education, youth and leisure services, is due to take up his new post on 1 April 2006 when the new integrated children's

service will be formally established. The council has 581 looked after children, of whom 279 are unaccompanied asylum-seekers. The Safeguarding Board has been established and is operational.

11. Hillingdon has 90 council-run schools, comprising 17 secondary, 65 primary, six special, one nursery and one pupil referral unit. All secondary schools have sixth forms. There are 10 independent schools in the borough.

12. West London Learning and Skills Council works in partnership with the local authority, schools, Uxbridge College, Brunel University, Hillingdon Education Business Partnership (HEBP), Connexions, work-based learning providers and other groups to implement the 14–19 strategy. Post-16 education and training is provided by 17 school sixth forms and three work-based learning providers, including Uxbridge Further Education College. Entry to Employment (E2E) provision and other apprenticeship training are provided by Hillingdon Training, a joint venture between the local authority and HEBP. Other work-based learning providers from outside the borough also offer such opportunities. Brunel University and Uxbridge College offer opportunities for progression into higher education. Adult and community learning, including family learning, are managed by the local authority.

## Summary report

### Outcomes for children and young people

13. Outcomes for most children and young people are adequate. There are inconsistencies in the outcomes achieved by some vulnerable groups. Children and young people are generally healthy and most believe this to be the case. However, in the more disadvantaged areas of the borough, health outcomes are less positive. Teenage pregnancy rates are high and rising. Children and young people feel safe and benefit from effective action to protect them from abuse and harm; most feel free from bullying and harassment. Children achieve satisfactory education standards overall, and those attained by pupils at the age of 7, and in English by pupils aged 14, have improved recently. There has been a moderate increase in the number of pupils achieving five good GCSE grades but this varies too much from one school to another. At Key Stage 2, outcomes are improving generally for pupils with Somali, Sri Lankan Tamil, Black Caribbean and Irish heritage traveller backgrounds; they are improving, too, for Asian and Black Caribbean pupils aged 16. Student performance at A level is below the national average but, once again, is improving. Overall, young people aged 16–19 make good progress. Beyond the age of 16, young people achieve higher standards than would be expected given their prior education attainment. However, these higher-than-expected standards are not as evident between Key Stages 2 and 4. Participation in further education has increased and learners' achievements have improved in 2004/05. While achievements in work-based learning are adequate overall, they are good for those in E2E provision, a particularly vulnerable group of learners. The number of learners not in education, employment or training is decreasing. Progression into higher

education, at 32%, is above the national average of 30%. Children and young people make a positive contribution to their local communities and take part in a wide range of activities. Their involvement in shaping provision and services is, however, less well developed.

## **Impact of local services**

### **Being healthy**

#### **14. The combined work of local services in securing the health of children and young people is adequate.**

15. A good range of universal and targeted services is provided to assist parents and carers in keeping children healthy. Immunisation rates are improving and admissions to hospital have reduced to below national rates. Effective multi-agency intervention through the Healthy Hillingdon partnership and by community health teams and nursing specialists have improved services and the quality of care overall. This has had a particularly positive impact on those children requiring health assessments and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Impact in some aspects is, however, less positive. For example, families in the traveller community have poorer health outcomes owing to inadequate amenities and poor access to healthcare provision. In the south of the borough, some general practitioners' involvement in child health services is poor and vulnerable families seek advice and treatment too often from alternative provision, such as the accident and emergency department at the local hospital.

16. There is a well-developed healthy schools programme focusing on healthy eating and physical activity; participation rates are good. Many young people, through schools and youth work settings, have access to and use a wide range of helpful information and advice about substance misuse and sexual behaviour. Although preventive work has been targeted, it has not yet been successful in reducing the high rate of teenage pregnancies.

17. There is good provision overall to promote positive mental health and, as a result of effective collaboration across the network of providers, access to specialist Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for the majority of children and young people has improved. However, services for some groups are inadequate, particularly for those young people known to the YOS who are not at school and, more generally, for young people aged 16–18 years.

### **Staying safe**

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

19. Those at risk of abuse or serious harm are protected well by effective multi-agency work. Arrangements for children and young people on the child protection register are good; numbers on the register are in line with similar

councils. Steps taken by the council to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect have been effective. The referral and assessment teams are well staffed with competent workers who benefit from high morale. The number of unallocated cases for looked after children is minimal and these children benefit greatly from appropriate care plans and good-quality placements. Children who enter the local authority via Heathrow Airport receive appropriate support that is tailored to meet their specific and often complex needs. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are safeguarded well. Care leavers receive a good service and pathway plans are used productively.

## **Enjoy and achieve**

### **20. The contribution of services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is adequate.**

21. The integrated strategy for childcare is sound. There are sufficient free childcare places for all 3 and 4 year olds. The council provides good monitoring and support to address the inconsistencies in the quality of some of the more established childcare provision.

22. Increased spending by the council to support and challenge schools and early years settings is showing some early signs of improving the standards achieved by children and young people. Data are being used by schools more effectively to identify underperforming groups. A good example is the improved outcomes for 11 year olds from Somali, Sri Lankan Tamil, Black Caribbean and Irish heritage traveller backgrounds, and for Asian and Black Caribbean pupils aged 16. Pupils in schools receiving targeted support, as well as those located in the Excellence Cluster, are making faster progress than others. The council has more schools causing concern than the national average. However, the high mobility of some families presents significant challenges for some schools to raising standards.

23. Relationships between schools and the local authority are much improved and headteachers are working well collaboratively to develop agreed protocols for interagency work. Difficulties in the recruitment and retention of teachers in secondary schools are having a negative impact on maintaining and improving standards. Good recruitment strategies have been developed by the council and these are having some success, but filling all vacant posts with suitably qualified and experienced staff is still problematic. Support for behaviour management in schools is now more targeted and well regarded, but has not yet resulted in a steady reduction in exclusions. There is good collaboration between partners to improve attendance, and the rates of unauthorised absences, particularly in primary schools, have reduced. Work of the Parent Partnership and other parenting programmes provides effective guidance and support, but ready access to information in languages other than English is limited.



## **Making a positive contribution**

### **24. The contribution of services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good.**

25. Children and young people receive good support to develop socially and emotionally, and are encouraged to develop positive relationships and a sense of personal responsibility. Young people have a number of opportunities to take part in local decision-making activities, although their views are not used well enough at a strategic level to influence the delivery of services. Good support is given to those who are facing difficulties such as exclusion from school, teenage pregnancy, and drug or alcohol-related problems. Support is less effective for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at transition points in their lives, particularly as they move from children's to adult services. Partnership programmes to combat anti-social behaviour and to prevent offending behaviour are well established, and are most effective with those young people identified at risk of social exclusion.

## **Economic well-being**

### **26. The contribution of services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good.**

27. Strong partnership arrangements ensure parents and carers have access to a good range of childcare and financial information. Good advice, guidance and support are provided for young people by Connexions and there is a clear focus on supporting the more vulnerable groups. For example, a Connexions specialist personal adviser is being recruited to offer intensive support in some special schools to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The strategy for developing 14–19 provision is clear and effective. Vocational and work-based learning opportunities have been significantly increased. The number of young people not in education, employment or training has been successfully reduced. Attainment levels for young people in work-based learning are adequate, although more vulnerable learners in E2E provision achieve good outcomes. GCE A-level results are below the national average although they are improving. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 16 and over do not achieve well when compared with national averages, and education, training and employment provision for them is limited. The process for housing homeless young people is effective.

## **Service management**

### **28. The management of services for children and young people is adequate.**

29. Relationships between partners are sound, and those between schools and the council are much improved. There is effective multi-agency working on the ground, with some good examples of teamwork. Joint strategic approaches are satisfactory and agreement about needs and priorities, with a shared focus

on tackling inequalities, has been reached. However, current service plans for children do not identify clearly the contributions, roles and responsibilities of all partners and significant decisions have still to be determined about the structure and procedures of the integrated children's services group. A children and young people's plan is in preparation. The CYPSPB is the overarching planning body for children and involves most key partners, including school and voluntary-sector representatives. Children and young people and their parents/carers have not been involved in strategic planning. Governance arrangements, including the involvement of councillors, are not clear.

30. Overall capacity to improve is adequate. The council manages its resources well, is now focused on improving value for money and is beginning to put savings to effective use. It is too early to identify the impact on outcomes of recent investment in schools and services but initial signs are promising. Capacity is weakest in relation to the PCT where financial difficulties this year mean that the future provision of health services for children is not secure. The council is already incurring additional costs associated with the provision of therapies for children with special educational needs as a result of current shortfalls in services commissioned by the PCT. This places the ability of the partnership to improve in some uncertainty, although the capacity of local services to improve overall is judged to be adequate. Performance management at the council is adequate overall. Partners recognise the need to develop sharper outcome measures to assess the impact of performance on service users. Self-assessment identifies accurately many of the issues facing the partnership and provides a secure foundation for the area's first children and young people's plan.

## Grades

**Grades awarded:**

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

	<b>Local services overall</b>	<b>Council services</b>	<b>Health services</b>
<b>Being healthy</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>Staying safe</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Enjoying and achieving</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>Making a positive contribution</b>	<b>3</b>		

<b>Achieving economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>		
<b>Service management</b>	<b>2</b>		
<b>Capacity to improve</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>Children's services</b>		<b>2</b>	
<b>The education service</b>		<b>2</b>	
<b>The education service</b>		<b>2</b>	
<b>The social care services for children</b>		<b>3</b>	
<b>The health service for children</b>			<b>2</b>

## Recommendations

### For immediate action:

- formalise the governance arrangements for the CYPSPB and its sub-groups, and ensure all plans and strategies for children identify clearly the contributions, roles and responsibilities of all partners
- review and strengthen arrangements to ensure that necessary improvements are made in the educational standards for all pupils and learners, including those looked after by the council, and ensure that the gap between the lowest-achieving and highest-performing schools is reduced
- review and strengthen provision of appropriate primary healthcare services in the south of the borough and for traveller communities generally
- reduce the rate of teenage pregnancies by targeting all available resources more precisely.

**For action over the next six months:**

- provide additional support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as they move from children's to adult services
- improve CAMHS services for young people known to the YOS who are not at school and for 16–18 year olds
- reduce the rate of pupil exclusions
- ensure that all information about services for children and young people are accessible to those who do not have English as their first language.

**For action in the longer term:**

- ensure children and young people participate fully in strategic decisions about the services they use
- ensure children and young people aged 16 and over with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve more highly and have better provision for employment and training.

## **Main report**

### **Outcomes for children and young people**

31. **Overall, most children and young people are healthy.** Outcomes for children and young people are good in many areas of the borough as a result of the support parents and carers receive to develop healthy lifestyles. The quality of care overall has improved for children, particularly for those requiring health assessments and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Outcomes are less good for children in the south of the borough where there are higher rates of low birth weight and dental decay, increased minor illness, and higher risk of teenage pregnancy and substance misuse. Immunisation rates for infants and pre-school children are improving and emergency admissions to hospital have reduced to below the national average. The majority of young people surveyed for this review considered themselves to be quite healthy or very healthy. Healthcare for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate overall and good for looked after children. Teenage pregnancy rates are high and rising, particularly in the areas where educational attainment levels are low.

32. **Children and young people appear safe.** Most children and young people who responded to the survey conducted for the review reported that they felt safe and free from bullying. They feel they can walk the streets and play outside with little risk, but some reported that there are areas of the borough where they do not feel quite so safe. The proportion of children on the child protection register is in line with the national average and there are

sufficient social workers to support vulnerable children and young people well. Schools and healthcare professionals have confidence in the child protection procedures and work effectively with the local social services staff. The local hospital accident and emergency department has good child protection procedures where names of all children coming in to the department are checked against the Hillingdon child protection list and the equivalent lists of neighbouring authorities. Road safety schemes are effective and admissions of children to hospital due to injuries are below the national average. When young people leave care, they have access to good-quality and affordable housing.

**33. Children and young people are well prepared for school and make adequate progress.** Standards overall are currently in line or, in some cases, just below the national average but are showing early signs of improvement. There has been a slight improvement in the number of 16-year-old pupils achieving five GCSE grades A\*–C. Although encouraging, the rate of improvement is not consistent and there is too much variation between schools across the borough. The council has more schools causing concern than found nationally. Some particular groups of pupils are making better progress and these include improved outcomes for 11 year olds from Somali, Sri Lankan Tamil, Black Caribbean and Irish-heritage traveller backgrounds and for Asian and Black Caribbean pupils aged 16. Pupils in schools receiving targeted support as well as those located in the Excellence Cluster are also making better progress. The attainment of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate. Attainment of looked after children at ages 7, 11 and 14 is below national averages, but above at Key Stage 4, although too few are entered for examinations.

34. There are sufficient childcare places for all 3 and 4 year olds who require it and the quality of childcare overall is adequate. There is, however, variation in standards across the sector. Newly registered childcare provision is generally better than existing provision, and nursery education in maintained schools is often better than that found in the private and voluntary sectors.

35. Attendance is improving overall, especially in relation to unauthorised absence at primary schools. The rate of permanent exclusions is average and not yet showing significant improvement.

**36. Children and young people have a good range of opportunities to make decisions and take personal responsibility. Many make a positive contribution to their communities.** Young people make good progress in their personal and social development as a result of effective work by schools, voluntary projects and the youth service, and some make a positive contribution to their local communities. Children and young people participate well in peer support and mentoring schemes in schools and value this involvement highly. Those facing challenging circumstances or who have complex needs receive effective support from a range of providers. However, support from local services at key transition points for some vulnerable groups, for example children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is not always

effective or appropriate. The council has consulted young people on a number of key issues but, generally, their participation in shaping services at strategic level is underdeveloped.

**37. Most young people are able to achieve economic well-being and they are prepared well for working life.** There are increasing numbers of 16–19 year olds participating in education, employment and training. Through Hillingdon Training, the borough offers E2E programmes for learners not in education, employment or training and attainment levels are good. Achievement, retention and progression rates are also good, with 81% progressing to further study, apprenticeships or employment. Young people are achieving well at the local further education college and at an adequate level overall in work-based learning. There is an improvement in the GCE A-level points score in local schools but attainment is still below the national average. Overall, young people aged 16–19 make good progress. Significantly more 14–16 year olds are participating in vocational training than previously. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at 16 years have lower achievement rates than the national average, with many leaving school without any qualifications. However, some of the entry-level and level 1 provision at the local further education college offers these learners the opportunity to build on the outcomes from school. Achievements at level 1 in the college are above the national average. Strong partnership arrangements ensure parents and carers have access to a range of childcare and financial information. Housing is good for most young people.

## **Impact of local public services**

### **Being healthy**

**38. The combined work of local services in securing the health of children and young people is adequate.**

39. There are high levels of commitment by partner agencies to improving health and addressing health inequalities. However, vulnerable groups experience gaps in services which have an adverse impact on health outcomes.

40. A good range of universal and targeted services assists parents and carers in keeping their children healthy. As part of the Healthy Hillingdon programme, libraries across the borough provide an accessible source of health-related information. Early years centres are working with parents/carers and childminders in promoting healthy lifestyles. The work of designated health visitors is helping the local area's first children's centre to expand this work. However, central government funding streams limit coverage. There is only one Sure Start programme, although future funding for Children's Fund initiatives is secure until 2008. The children of traveller families and asylum-seekers are particularly at risk of ill health. An independent health needs analysis has revealed serious concerns about the risks to traveller children on the site in

West Drayton from the poor amenities and inadequate environmental health services available to them.

41. Teenage parents and mothers at risk from substance misuse and HIV have effective specialist midwifery support to meet their additional needs in pregnancy. There has been an overall improvement in the reduction of smoking in pregnancy and in breastfeeding, but this improvement is not reflected in all parts of the borough. Hospital paediatric staff have a good understanding of their role as health educators and the children's accident and emergency department has developed an effective public health approach to support some 20,000 attendances by children and young people each year.

42. Most children and young people are healthy and health screening is in line with national guidance. Immunisations for infants and pre-school children are below national rates but are improving owing to effective intervention programmes in clinics and other settings. Emergency admissions to hospital have been reduced to below national rates through active management of acute and chronic illness. The involvement of general practitioners in preventive child health is, however, poor in parts of the south of the borough and families frequently use alternative sources of advice and treatment, such as accident and emergency departments, for acute illnesses. The Healthy Schools programme is effective in most schools and 89% of eligible schools run the National School Fruit Scheme. There are increasing levels of participation by children in physical activity, particularly through sports development in schools and the use of parks and green spaces.

43. Sexual health advisory services and clinics providing contraception and counselling offer effective support to many young people. However, the teenage pregnancy rate is rising more quickly in schools where educational attainment is poor and, although provision is targeted, it is not yet successful in showing a reduction in teenage pregnancies.

44. Effective interagency working with children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is supporting their inclusion in early years settings and at school. Overall, children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive adequate healthcare. However, the reduction of school nursing services outside school term times, and limitations to ongoing therapy and appropriate equipment, impedes continuity of provision.

45. There is good multi-agency work to promote positive mental health, for example work on domestic violence, bullying and school-based work, to enhance children's confidence and self-esteem. Open-access counselling services for young people are well used. The availability of more specialised mental health services for most young people has improved through effective collaboration across the network of providers and greater clarity in the referral procedures. However, certain groups of young people still have difficulty receiving appropriate CAMHS support. Access to CAMHS services for looked after children within the borough is adequate but those placed outside the

borough receive an inconsistent service. There is insufficient provision for a small group of children known to the YOS who are out of school, for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and, more generally, for young people aged between 16 and 18 years. The PCT recognises these gaps in provision and is taking action to address them.

46. The general health of looked after children is good, with 86% of health assessments being completed within statutory timescales. Designated nurses for looked after children work closely with staff and foster carers, who report that children and young people in their care receive helpful guidance and support to lead healthy lifestyles.

### **Staying safe**

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

48. Steps taken to minimise the incidence of child abuse through the use of effective multi-agency working are functioning well and children are protected. Hillingdon works effectively with its partners to ensure that, when an assessment of a child causes concern, the situation is dealt with swiftly and without undue delay. Child protection is seen as a priority throughout all agencies. Child protection cases are allocated to a qualified worker and there is effective monitoring of their work. Senior managers and lead councillors are well informed about the work of the child protection teams and provide effective leadership.

49. The children's Safeguarding Board offers training in child protection to staff at all levels; however, in some circumstances, part-time staff are unable to take part readily in this training. Policies for children missing from school, including looked after children, are effective, but only a draft interagency protocol for children missing from home is in place.

50. School staff find the child protection procedures useful and the social work teams responsive. Health professionals are able to attend case conferences and see attendance as a high priority. Parents and carers attended 74% of child protection conferences over the last year. Domestic violence is referred routinely to the child protection teams by the police and there is a clear strategy to ensure children are safeguarded in families where there are incidents of domestic violence.

51. All reviews for child protection cases and looked after children are chaired by independent reviewing officers. They are all experienced social workers who have effective relationships with the social work teams to ensure that plans are implemented. They also chair complex strategy meetings about child protection concerns. This is an excellent innovation that enables an independent view to be given to serious cases at an early stage. Social workers are helped through legal processes by a legal team that offers advice and representation when required.



52. Children interviewed and surveyed for this review believe they get good advice from their schools and community police teams on staying safe and a large majority feel very safe or quite safe in school. There is an effective off-site activities policy for school pupils. Health visitors regularly give advice on safety and social workers do so in individual cases. Schools have comprehensive guidance available for those who are bullied. However, a significant number of children and young people do not feel safe in some parts of the borough. The council is taking steps to improve safety by setting up safer neighbourhood schemes. Road safety schemes for children in Hillingdon are good and admissions of children and young people to hospital because of injury are below the national average.

53. Referral rates for children in need are high. This is being addressed by the introduction of a new preventive strategy, brought about by an effective best value review conducted in 2004. The council has invested extra financial resources for its implementation. Information outlining the range and eligibility criteria of services is not available to the public or to some staff in agencies who work with children and young people. Some leaflets produced about services are only produced in English, even though a large number of residents do not have English as their first language.

54. Social work staff in the referral and assessment teams and in the family support teams are appropriately supervised and supported. Turnover is comparatively low. Staff are appropriately recruited, adequate checks are made to ensure they are properly vetted and teams are well staffed. Training is seen as important and staff are encouraged to attend courses on a regular basis. Workloads are high and some low-priority work, such as children-in-need cases, do not always receive prompt attention. However, casework is generally of a high quality. Supervisors regularly audit files and they contain evidence of decision-making by managers. Over 80 staff across the council in all departments and in the PCT received training in the use of the common assessment framework, which is due to be launched in spring 2006.

55. There are few unallocated cases. These are managed 'on duty' by either the referral and assessment teams or the family support teams. A small number of these are for looked after children who are unallocated as they are 'between teams' or awaiting a new social worker. Unallocated cases are overseen by a team manager who ensures that the care plans for looked after children are carried through. While these allocations are for a short time and only represent 3.6% of the looked after child population, this is unsatisfactory.

56. Approximately 39% of looked after children are placed outside the borough because there are not enough local foster carers to accommodate them. These placements are monitored effectively and are well matched to meet needs. The council is at present running a successful recruitment campaign and is attracting an increased number of applicants. Foster carers are well supported and receive effective training. Young people leaving care have adequate pathway plans and are allocated appropriate housing. Children with

learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported appropriately by a specialist social work team. Those looked after children with disabilities have statements and care plans that reflect their individual needs.

57. Heathrow Airport places extra demands on the resources of the council. Last year, 117 children were looked after by Hillingdon as a result of child protection concerns of immigration staff at the airport. The council receives no additional funding for these children. In addition, 279 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children were also being looked after by the council. The council and its partners work effectively with the immigration services to ensure that all of these children are adequately safeguarded.

### **Enjoying and achieving**

**58. The contribution of services to helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and achieve well is adequate.**

59. The integrated strategy for childcare is sound. There are sufficient free childcare places for all 3 and 4 year olds. The council provides good monitoring and support to address the inconsistencies in the quality of some of the more established childcare provision. It has adopted some creative strategies to stimulate and support the development of new childcare provision that will meet the need for more out-of-school and holiday care and places for children under 2 years old. Children's centres are well targeted at areas of greatest need.

60. The highly regarded Parent Partnership Service provides effective support for parents and carers. A range of relevant information is available to support them, but little is readily available in languages other than English and guidance on how to access the information in other languages is similarly limited. A high proportion of children within the school population have English as an additional language and the council makes good use of an interpreting service for parents and carers when they attend meetings. Adult education provides valuable family learning sessions to help parents support their children's learning.

61. A number of new strategies to improve outcomes for children of school age have recently been introduced. There are early signs of improvement for 7 year olds and in English for pupils aged 14; there has been a moderate increase in the number of 16-year-old pupils achieving five or more GCSE A\*–C grades. Improvement is not yet consistent, however, and there is too much variation between schools across the borough. The council has more schools causing concern than nationally. There is considerable movement of families across the borough, which makes it difficult to achieve consistency in target-setting as children move between schools.

62. Relationships between schools and the local authority are much improved and headteachers have worked collaboratively to develop the revised protocol for school categorisation. Difficulties in the recruitment and retention of teachers in secondary schools are having a negative impact on maintaining and

improving standards. Although the council is working hard to overcome this, difficulties remain in filling posts with suitably qualified and experienced staff. Effective support from the authority to improve behaviour in schools has been welcomed, and headteachers are assuming collective responsibility for the placing of more challenging pupils. Strategies to improve attendance are having a positive impact, particularly in addressing unauthorised absences in the primary sector, but the rate of permanent exclusions is not yet showing a steady decline.

63. The council uses a wide range of data effectively to identify underperforming groups. Intervention, including targeted use of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG), has resulted in improved outcomes for 11 year olds from Somali, Sri Lankan Tamil, Black Caribbean and Irish heritage Traveller backgrounds, and for Asian and Black Caribbean pupils aged 16. However, the council's strategy to deal with underachievement on a school-by-school basis has not been communicated clearly to headteachers. Results in schools receiving targeted support, and secondary schools in the Excellence Cluster, are generally improving at a faster rate than others. Work on developing extended schools has been slow but is progressing. A newly structured school improvement service is designed to deliver a much sharper focus on improving standards, but is not yet in place.

64. Secondary schools have sufficient places and many more parents in Hillingdon received their first preference of secondary school for their children than in neighbouring boroughs or nationally. There are surplus places in primary schools in parts of the borough and under-capacity elsewhere. The council is monitoring carefully the possible impact on school places of changes in the population and likely developments at Heathrow Airport. The quality of school buildings is variable, but the council is beginning to address this issue through the development of academies and successful capital bids.

65. Partnership work between education and social services to support the education of looked after children is satisfactory. Schools receive good support from the education officer for looked after children who liaises well with designated teachers: the attendance of these pupils is good. However, their educational achievement is poor in comparison with looked after children placed outside the borough and, at ages 7, 11 and 14, it is below the national average. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is above the national average, although too few learners are entered for examinations or have personal education plans. The support offered to unaccompanied asylum-seeking, looked after children is satisfactory. The designated teacher for these pupils has developed good partnerships with schools and voluntary organisations.

66. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate, although there is insufficient monitoring of their progress. Services work well together to support families of young children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although this has not yet been formed into an integrated service for disabled children. There is a clear commitment from all agencies to promoting

inclusion, supported by a sound training programme and good co-operation between schools. As a result, the numbers and costs of children being placed in schools outside the borough are reducing. Too little is done to support the education of young carers. There is insufficient provision of health-based therapies for children attending mainstream schools. Despite the council making additional funding available, some children are still not receiving the services they need.

67. Helpful advice is available to schools and early years settings in respect of their statutory responsibilities, but the quality of annual and transitional reviews is inconsistent. The council is unable to evaluate the effectiveness of provision on improving outcomes for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as there is no agreed approach to monitoring their progress. The accessibility strategy has only recently been drafted and is inadequate: it makes insufficient links with other key plans and council departments to ensure the efficient use of resources.

68. Provision for excluded pupils is good. Most younger children are reintegrated into schools and most older pupils have a full-time equivalent programme. These pupils are tracked and monitored well but, for a small minority, this provision does not fully meet the need for supervised activities during the school day. A good range of individually tailored provision is available for other pupils who are unable to attend school. Pupils educated at home by parents are monitored and clear procedures are in place to ensure any child protection concerns are addressed.

69. Through the survey of children and young people's views conducted for the review and in meetings, children and young people generally said that there are enough recreational and leisure activities available to them in their area; however, the cost of activities and transport, and concern about personal safety, limit their participation in a wider choice and range of activities. The library service is effective in engaging increasingly large numbers of children in reading activities and, in a recent event, 7,300 children took part in a reading challenge programme. The Pyramid Trust provides safe after-school activities for vulnerable children and take-up is good. The council and partner agencies have developed comprehensive arts and sports strategies that encourage children and young people to take part in a range of programmes after school and in the holiday periods. The youth service is judged to be of adequate quality overall and is improving well. It has many good features and offers a varied curriculum. The service has seen increased take-up and is on target to meet national standard requirements by the end of the financial year.

### **Making a positive contribution**

**70. The overall contribution of services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good.**

71. A wide range of opportunities exist for children and young people to make a positive contribution and they are consulted routinely through a range of

activities such as democracy day, school elections, school and youth councils, and pyramid clubs. However, there is no overarching strategy for participation and the council acknowledges that children and young people's views are not used sufficiently to shape provision or to inform strategy across all services. In the youth service, for example, the views of children and young people are too often mediated through adults. A recent decision to increase the frequency of meetings with the youth council and the council's senior managers is a positive development, as is the consultation with pupils in 10 schools to inform the development of the children and young people's plan.

72. The Healthy Hillingdon programme has been effective in enabling 7,000 children and young people to air their views on issues such as bullying, drugs, alcohol abuse and smoking. These views were used appropriately to steer health promotion priorities. All secondary schools and most primary schools have school councils, but there are insufficient links to the youth council. Minority ethnic groups are well represented on the youth council.

73. A good range of effective initiatives is in place to promote children and young people's personal, social and emotional development. Youth service activities and schools in particular provide extensive opportunities to develop positive relationships, take responsibility and value diversity. Some effective peer support and mentoring schemes in schools enable children and young people to support each other. Parents seeking guidance value the support of training schemes, such as the 'Triple P' parenting programme to promote positive relationships with their children.

74. In general, children and young people receive good support in managing change and in coping with difficult periods in their lives. Pupils who find it hard to attend school full time as a result of significant emotional or medical needs are provided with sensitive and appropriate help. Young carers are supported well by Hillingdon Young Carers project, although workers believe that schools are generally unresponsive to their particular needs. Transitions from alternative provision back to school are well supported. However, in the immediate period following permanent exclusion, vulnerable young people and their parents/carers are given too little support to allay anxieties and to understand how their needs might be met.

75. Community initiatives are promoting the engagement of children and young people effectively. The number of volunteers has increased by 49% over the past two years, including a high proportion of young people under 25 years old from a diverse range of minority ethnic backgrounds. One group of young people worked as volunteers to change a derelict site to a sports court and another group is involved in a programme to reclaim parks as safe areas for children. The library service is successful in involving an increasing number of children and young people in fun activities to promote literacy and learning.

76. Partnerships between the council and police are effective in reducing anti-social behaviour. The YOS is improving practice in developing the range of

activities and interventions to promote law-abiding behaviour. Workers identify effectively the educational and training needs of young people known to the service, but the range and availability of provision do not always match needs and a minority of excluded pupils are hard to place.

77. Three safer neighbourhood teams have been very successful in reducing youth crime. The junior Youth Inclusion Support Project has intervened productively with 51 young people and this has significantly reduced the numbers who offend and receive a final warning. More funding has been secured to create new projects. Re-offending rates among first-time entrants to the youth justice system have decreased. On average, looked after children receive fewer final warnings and convictions than nationally.

78. Good work to promote positive community relations is taking place in some schools. A truancy sweep programme, organised in partnership with the local police and the education welfare service, is successful in promoting regular school attendance. Targeted holiday programmes are well attended by children and young people in school holiday periods. Primary schools report that there is good support from the local authority for combating racism and there is a comprehensive local authority anti-bullying policy which provides good guidance to schools.

79. The views of children and young people known to social services are routinely canvassed. Looked after children have a voice through a range of appropriate channels including the Children's Rights Service and views are recorded at statutory reviews. Young people are generally positive about their care, although they are not always clear about how to access the complaints system.

80. In some instances, children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities contribute fully to reviews. However, practice is variable and their views and those of their parents and carers are not always recorded. Support at transition points is inconsistent, particularly in transition from children's to adult services. Planning future provision for vulnerable pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is monitored through the transitions panel, but guidance and clarity in respect of roles, responsibilities and expected outcomes is inadequate.

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

**81. The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good.**

82. Good partnership working has successfully expanded childcare provision over the last five years and, as a result, more parents have been able to gain access to employment opportunities. Funding has recently been acquired to increase the number of subsidised childcare places. Comprehensive information on childcare and finance is available, although information in languages other than English is limited. Young parents under 19 years returning to learning

receive helpful and detailed information and financial support for childcare from the Care-to-Learn organisation.

83. A commitment to consult with local communities is set out in the new community strategy. Community projects, such as Sure Start, are targeted at the most deprived areas, largely in the south of the borough, and address priority issues involving a range of partner agencies. Where possible, residents, including children and young people, are encouraged to become involved in planning local provision.

84. Good advice, guidance and support on a range of issues are provided by Connexions to help young people prepare for working life. In the last year, the Connexions service has been brought into the local authority, strengthening its responsiveness to Hillingdon's specific needs. For example, effective preventive work has been undertaken by Connexions personal advisers with Year 10 pupils at risk of leaving school early or failing their GCSEs. A Connexions specialist personal adviser is being recruited to work with three of the special schools in the borough to offer greater support to learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In partnership with the voluntary sector, young people from minority ethnic groups are offered support tailored to their specific needs.

85. As part of the 14–19 strategic partnership, the borough is working effectively with key decision-makers to address the wide variation in curriculum and achievements between the school sixth forms. A comprehensive strategy is in place and has already had a significant positive impact. A key issue for the strategic partnership is the high quantity of jobs open to young people, which are low skilled and with few prospects for advancement. The strategy aims to increase vocational options to improve participation and success for 14–16 year olds and to increase training opportunities for those post-16 year olds who are already in work. Good progress is being made.

86. Vocational provision has been increased in schools and the local college which now offer a range of work-based learning and apprenticeship schemes in, for example motor vehicle maintenance, construction, information technology, and hair and beauty. Hillingdon Training offers an increasing range of programmes including E2E to meet the needs of young people not in education, employment or training and progression rates are good. A Centre of Vocational Excellence is planned with the British Airport Authority, offering two training areas in retail and engineering, and has the local learning and skills council's approval.

87. The number of students participating in education or training aged 16 and above is improving. These students do better than between Key Stages 2 and 4. Young people's participation rates in schools and colleges have increased but, while numbers entering full-time education in Hillingdon are above the national average, they are still below those of neighbouring authorities. Achievements of those young people attending the local college are above the national average; levels of attainment in work-based learning are adequate and

are broadly in line with national averages. Attainment at GCE A level is also improving across the borough but is still below national levels. However, university entry requirements are met and progression into higher education is above the national average although below the London West average. The average point scores per entry are in line with the national average. The number of young people not in education, employment or training has been successfully reduced from 9.1% in April 2004 to 7.65% in April 2005. The percentage of young people known to the YOS who are in education, employment or training is in line with the national average, but below the Youth Justice Board performance target of 90%.

88. Overall, housing provision for young people is adequate. Clear and effective arrangements are in place for housing 16–17 year olds who are homeless, although some young people with Anti-social Behaviour Orders reported difficulties in being offered housing. Housing for some unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people aged over 16 years is not always suited to their specific social or cultural needs. Young people over 18 can directly access supported accommodation or use the social housing lettings scheme. Lone teenage parents are offered suitable semi-independent homes with good support arrangements. Most housing for those leaving care is suitable and affordable.

89. Looked after children are well supported in preparing for working life. A higher-than-average proportion of care leavers (73%) is in work, education and training. Pathway plans are appropriately completed and reflect the individual's specific needs.

90. Achievement for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at 16 years is lower than the national average, with too many pupils leaving school without any qualifications. Some of the entry-level and level 1 provision at the local college offers these learners the opportunity to build on the outcomes achieved at school. Overall achievements at level 1 in the college are above the national average. There is some vocational provision in the local college for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who attend the pupil referral unit and for those with more complex needs, but the choice of programmes offered to them is limited.

## **Service management**

**91. The management of services for children and young people is adequate.**

92. Partners are currently working to refresh their vision for children in response to the change for children agenda. Ambitions are adequate and reflect the local context, for example, school attainment has not improved sufficiently and too many young people leave school without qualifications. Self-assessment provides a sound basis for the partnership's first comprehensive children and young people's plan, which has been slow to evolve.



93. The CYPSPB is a group within the local strategic partnership and is the overarching planning body for children. Membership represents key partners, including schools and voluntary-sector groups, and relationships between the many partners are sound. There are many good examples of multi-agency working, particularly at operational level. Joint work at strategic level is satisfactory but there is still work to be done. For example, arrangements for the governance of the CYPSPB and its subgroups, including the respective roles, responsibilities and the contributions of councillors, council services and partners, are not yet clear; currently the board does not engage children and young people, parents or carers in strategic decision-making.

94. Children, young people and carers have been consulted about specific plans and services, and steps have been taken to ensure that the diverse interests of the community are represented. The council does not feed back the outcomes of consultation systematically. Parents have expressed the wish to be consulted more about services and to be more involved in service planning. Councillors have received presentations from officers on the development of children's services. Despite this, members of scrutiny committees did not appear fully informed about the significance of the changes to children's services.

95. Partners have a sound understanding of the experiences and needs of children and young people. Performance data and analyses are of good quality. Inequalities in outcomes have been identified so that action can be targeted appropriately at need, for example, underperforming groups targeted with support through EMAG have improved attainment at Key Stage 2. The council has used best value reviews appropriately to investigate underperformance and regular use of performance clinics to generate useful evidence about what has been achieved, about unmet need and the options for change.

96. Currently, objectives for children's services are distributed between the council's group plans and the relevant plans of partners and partnerships; they are not well linked. The focus on local priorities is adequate: this includes a sustained commitment to children's social care which has resulted in tangible improvements. A staged approach to change has been adopted by partners to avoid disruption to key services. The council has risen to the challenge presented by children arriving at Heathrow Airport, ensuring that all children are protected, fulfilling obligations to those at risk from trafficking and to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. This has been at considerable additional cost to the authority.

97. Resources have been targeted at priorities. Until 2005/06 the schools budget was approximately £2m below the Council's Formula Funding Spending Share, in keeping with many other local authorities. The decision of the council to plug this gap added to improving relations between the schools and the local authority. The recent school survey reflects a far more positive attitude than in previous years. The council's support for the recruitment of teachers and social

workers is good. The council has redirected savings to the development of services for vulnerable children.

98. The council links its service strategies to resources through its medium-term financial forecast, and a challenge process encourages efficiency savings and value for money. Current service plans for children do not identify comprehensively the contributions to be made by all partners.

99. Joint work to deliver the council's priorities is making sound progress. A good example is the Multi-agency Support Team, which supports families at an early stage to reduce the growth in numbers of looked after children.

100. The overall capacity of Hillingdon and its partners is adequate. The current director of education, youth and leisure is the designated director of children's services. The lead member for children's services has also been identified and each has been involved actively in the planning for integrated children's services. Clear decisions about service structures and integrated processes have yet to emerge, including the future role of schools within the integrated approach. There has been some early work on the development of a children's trust which is planned for 2007.

101. Budget pressures and value-for-money considerations provided the impetus to develop local commissioning strategies. A draft strategy for vulnerable children and young people was issued recently, linked to the recommendations of a best value review. In common with other policy documents produced in support of the integrated children's service agenda, a social care perspective predominates. Joint commissioning with partners is at an early stage of development.

102. Budget monitoring and financial management at the council have improved and are now good. The capacity of finance staff across children's service areas has been enhanced; the council has engaged a consultant to support the integration of finance in the new children's services group. There are some small, shared budgets, for example the vulnerable children's grant, and education and health monies to support the Healthy Hillingdon programme, but there has been no formal pooling of budgets as defined under section 31 to date.

103. The council is planning its budget for children's services. This needs to be realistic so that historic overspending in children's social services is not perpetuated in the new arrangements. Partnership arrangements do not include formal agreements about the respective roles, accountabilities and responsibilities of partners. The current financial difficulties faced by the PCT, resulting in the recent issuing of a public interest report, means that the future provision of health services for children is not secure. The council is already incurring additional costs associated with the provision of therapies for children with special educational needs as a result of shortfalls in services delivered by the PCT. Although working relationships across health and the local authority are sound with some effective collaboration, continuing concern about the

commitment of resources means that partnership arrangements in respect of the PCT are judged to be weak.

104. Value for money overall is adequate. Some services, such as behaviour support, offer good value for money. In other areas, such as children's residential care, costs are relatively high. Poor value is being tackled across services and this is now a key consideration in placement decisions, both in special education and in children's social care. Significant savings have been made through the implementation of procurement strategies that focus on inclusion. New investment has been made in schools and services but it is too soon to see the impact of this on outcomes.

105. The partnership's arrangements for performance management are adequate overall. An effective framework is in place to monitor progress against targets. At the council, performance clinics have tackled underperformance effectively. Partners are developing sharper outcome measures to assess the impact of performance on service users. The current organisation of overview and scrutiny is not consistent with the new integrated children's service structure performance information.

106. Strategic targeting of resources and early signs of improvement mean that the capacity of the council to improve services is adequate. In view of current uncertainty about the PCT's financial standing, the partnership is less secure, but the capacity of local services to improve overall is judged to be adequate.

---

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

1. The council is working constructively with partners at strategic and operational levels to provide a range of services for children and young people. The council is focused on improving value for money and some services, such as behaviour support, offer good value. Some costs remain relatively high but services provide adequate value for money overall.

2. Most children and young people are healthy, but more vulnerable groups and those living in disadvantaged parts of the borough are more likely to have poorer health outcomes. In most cases, local partners work well with the council in ensuring that children and young people receive adequate healthcare. Integrated services, for example in the Sure Start area, are contributing well to improving health outcomes. Most schools are supportive of the Healthy Schools programme and engage in a range of health-related work. Good work is taking place to promote positive mental health among young people. However, vulnerable groups experience gaps in provision through poor targeting of resources and this is impacting adversely on health outcomes. The teenage pregnancy rate is high and rising, particularly in areas of relative disadvantage.

3. The council's social services department provides good support for looked after children and those on the child protection register. Children and young people appear safe. Those at risk of abuse or serious harm are protected well by effective multi-agency work across services. Social work teams are generally well staffed and morale is high. Care leavers receive an acceptable service and pathway plans are used productively. The number of unallocated children-in-need cases held on duty is minimal.

4. Overall education outcomes for most children and young people are adequate. Educational attainment remains at or just below national averages and, although there are tentative signs of improvement, it is too early to identify the impact of new investment by the council in schools and services. There has been effective targeting of support for some Black and minority ethnic groups. Services work well together to improve attendance and provision for excluded pupils and those unable to attend school is good. Children and young people who are looked after and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities underachieve. Looked after children educated in local schools do not achieve as well as those who are placed outside the borough. Attainment at Key Stage 4 is above national averages but below at ages 7, 11 and 14.

5. Children and young people are encouraged to develop positive relationships and become involved in local youth and community activities. They make good progress in their personal and social development. Effective multi-agency initiatives are in place to address anti-social behaviour and to keep children and young people involved in positive activities during their leisure time. Effective support is given to most young people who are experiencing

difficulties, although transition arrangements for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are inadequate. There are few opportunities for children to become involved in shaping the services they use. The council's youth service is adequate and improving well.

6. Parents and carers are provided with comprehensive information on childcare options and finance to support them in employment. The Connexions service provides good advice and targeted support to young people from diverse backgrounds to help them prepare for working life. An effective 14–19 strategic partnership has been successful in developing the range of vocational pathways and increasing numbers of young people are staying on post-16 in education, training or employment. However, young people aged 16 and over with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in Hillingdon have limited opportunities for education and training. Housing for young people is decent and appropriate to meet most young people's needs.

7. The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board (CYPSPB), a multi-agency group chaired by the chief executive of the council, is the overarching planning group for integrated children's services and involves key partners, including schools and voluntary-sector representatives. It has made adequate progress in integrating children's services. Significant decisions about the structure and procedures of the new service have, however, still to be made. A children and young people's plan is in preparation.

8. The overall capacity of the council and its partners is adequate. Financial management at the council is good. Savings have been identified and redirected to priority areas. Capacity is weakest in relation to the PCT where significant financial pressures mean that the provision of health services for children and young people is not secure. The council is already incurring additional costs associated with the provision of therapies for children and young people with special educational needs as a result of current shortfalls in services delivered by the PCT.

9. Performance management at the council is adequate overall. There is an effective framework for monitoring performance against current targets in Children's Social Services and in Education, Youth and Leisure. Performance clinics have tackled underperformance effectively in a number of service areas, such as the 14–19 strategy. Partners recognise that sharper outcome measures are necessary to assess the impact of performance on service users. Capacity to improve at the council and in local services overall is adequate.