



**Better  
education  
and care**

# Joint area review

Hartlepool

Children's Services Authority Area

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## Review of services for children and young people

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

1. This joint area review was conducted using the arrangements required under Section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of seven inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), the Healthcare Commission (HCC), the 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.

3. This review describes the outcomes achieved by children and young people growing up in the Hartlepool area and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being. Joint area reviews focus on the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and are well prepared to secure economic well-being.

4. The review evaluates the collective contribution made to each outcome for children and young people by relevant services in the area. It also judges the contributions made by the council's services overall and, specifically, its education and children's social care services. Particular attention is given to joint action by local services on behalf of those groups of children and young people who are vulnerable to poor outcomes. Two such groups are covered in detail: children and young people who are looked after by the council; and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

5. The review took place in two stages consisting in total of three weeks over a six-week period. The first stage reviewed all existing evidence including:

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

6. The second stage involved 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 one neighbourhood in Hartlepool. It also included gathering evidence primarily on six 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. Hartlepool is a compact coastal authority and its population of nearly 90,000 is projected to decline slightly over the next decade. It is located at the eastern end of the Tees valley and, despite a port facility and being close to a major north–south trunk road route, Hartlepool remains relatively isolated from the national transport infrastructure and major markets. From a strong economic position in 1900, with a thriving port and associated industries, Hartlepool town and area had been in decline. However, there is now strong evidence of a growing renaissance supported by both public-sector and private-sector investment. Reinvestment in the docks area, for example, including The Maritime Experience and the marina, is generating tourism that will be further enhanced by Hartlepool's hosting of the Tall Ships event in 2010. Regeneration is also strongly evident in the town itself, particularly with ongoing large scale housing redevelopment.

8. The town of Hartlepool is densely populated, with the rest of the borough being predominantly rural. Nearly 2% of the population is of black or minority ethnic heritage, although this small percentage is growing. The 0–19 age group represents 27% of the population, which is higher than the national average, although this is projected to fall to around 15% of the overall total over the next 13 years. The area is socio-economically disadvantaged, with 40% of Hartlepool residents living within the category of the 10% most deprived areas in the country. Life expectancy is lower than national and regional averages, with wide variations between council wards. Unemployment rates are significantly higher than the national average, contributing to an underlying culture of disadvantage. Hartlepool Council became a unitary authority in 1996. Overall political control is held numerically by Labour, although there is an independent elected Mayor and an inclusive coalition cabinet.

9. There is a range of nursery settings in Hartlepool, together with 30 primary schools, six secondary schools, two special schools and three further education colleges, making this one of the smallest Local Education Authorities nationally. Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council (LSC) are partners with the local authority, post-16 colleges, training providers and schools in addressing the 14–19 strategy. Post 16 education and training is provided by one further education college, one sixth form college, one 11-18 Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided secondary school and 17 work-based training providers. Entry to Employment provision is managed by three providers within a local consortium

controlling 126 places. Adult and community learning, including family learning, is provided by the local authority and Hartlepool College of further education. Cleveland College of Art and design also provides education and training in Hartlepool.

10. Primary care for children in Hartlepool is provided by the Hartlepool Primary Care Trust. North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust is the main provider of acute health services. Other children's hospital services are provided by South Tees NHS Trust, which also provides services to surrounding areas. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are provided by the Tees, Esk and Wear Valley NHS Trust, which also provides services to surrounding areas. The trusts providing health services for the children of Hartlepool, with the exception of the Ambulance Service, fall within the North East Strategic Health Authority.

11. There are no young offender institutions (YOI) in the immediate area. Close liaison exists, however, with Castington YOI in Northumberland, since this institution caters for any remand requirements from Hartlepool. High levels of social deprivation contribute to higher than average levels of crime.

12. Services for children and young people are delivered by Hartlepool children's services, which incorporate early years, children's social care services, education, Children's Fund and the youth service. The council has corporate parenting responsibility for 125 looked after children and young people.

## Summary Report

### Outcomes for children and young people

13. **Outcomes for children and young people in Hartlepool are good.** The findings of this review corroborate most judgements reached by the authority and its partners in their self-assessment. There is, indeed, strong partnership working across all outcome areas, with good examples of flexible arrangements to meet specific individual needs. Health education and provision is generally good, although there is a weakness in the dedicated provision of CAMHS to those children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The most vulnerable children and young people are well safeguarded through effective action by all agencies. Good and improving early years and childcare provision is available to all who require it. Standards of educational attainment have continued to improve and are now generally good, which is commendable, particularly given the socio-economic factors involved. The reintegration of excluded school pupils, however, remains a concern. Particularly good support is offered to vulnerable pupils, who consequently achieve well, although there are poorer levels of progression and participation in extended education for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Consultation with children and young people is well developed, although the full participation of Black and minority ethnic groups in this respect is underdeveloped. Multi-agency work to reduce offending and anti-social

behaviour is generally good. Young people are increasingly prepared well for working life, although the numbers who are not in education, employment or training remains high. Hartlepool Borough Council and its partners are justifiably proud of what has been achieved to date, but are continuing with a clear and ambitious vision to further improve services for children and young people.

## **The impact of local services**

### **14. The impact of local services in improving outcomes for children and young people is good.**

#### **Being healthy**

**15. The impact of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good.** Partnership working on health issues is good. Universal and targeted multi-agency services support parents and carers well in keeping children healthy. A well coordinated approach to promoting healthy lifestyles for schoolchildren and young people is effective, leading to good outcomes such as healthier eating in schools. Hospital services for children are generally satisfactory, with a very good environment for day-case surgery. Access to CAMHS is generally good, but the service for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is underdeveloped. Conversely, looked after children and young people enjoy priority access to CAMHS and receive a good service. There are good programmes for drug, alcohol and sex education and good services for young people who develop substance misuse problems. Healthcare for looked after children is good, and the particular needs of Black and minority ethnic groups and traveller families are addressed well.

#### **Staying safe**

**16. The impact of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good.** Families and children in need of support, and children and young people at risk of harm, are well supported through a comprehensive range of preventative services, which also decrease the need for children to become looked after. Joint commissioning arrangements for looked after children, however, are underdeveloped. Local agencies share information well and make timely assessments and refer their concerns appropriately. Initial referral, assessment and case transfer arrangements in children's social care are well managed, and good multi-agency communication means that thresholds are mostly well understood. The quality of assessments varies from adequate to good. Child protection arrangements are robust, and protection plans are effective and are regularly reviewed. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is developing well with sound leadership, but it lacks capacity to undertake its wider safeguarding role. Serious case reviews are appropriately and thoroughly undertaken and action plans are implemented effectively, but not always within the required timescale. Vetting checks for staff in regular contact with children are adequate and improving. Children's services staff

receive good support from their managers and their access to training is at least adequate.

## Enjoying and achieving

**17. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good.** Parents and carers are provided with good support and guidance, which is well targeted in the most disadvantaged areas. Support for early years and childcare providers is effective and there are enough places to give parents sufficient choice. The strategy for early years and childcare is good, using the existing SureStart programmes effectively to secure the expansion of children's centres to meet local need. The high quality work of school improvement services is reducing the number of schools causing concern and improving the quality of provision, particularly in primary schools and special schools. Effective use of national strategies is improving pupil performance in targeted schools. Standards of attainment are good overall. The achievement of 11 and 16 year olds is very good, compared to statistical comparators, but the proportion of pupils achieving good GCSEs in English and mathematics remains low. Children and young people of Black and minority ethnic heritage and those looked after by the council make good progress. The council has made good progress to reduce surplus places in schools, maintaining choice in local areas. Nearly all parents achieve their first choice of primary and secondary school. The guidance to parents for admissions to schools is fit for purpose. Pupil attendance and behaviour is good. Exclusions in primary and secondary schools have fallen, but remain slightly above the national average in secondary schools, and the rate of reintegration into mainstream schools is too low. There is very good support for the most vulnerable pupils, including children looked after by the council and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The council has an excellent policy for including pupils with special educational needs within mainstream schools. These pupils make good progress and achieve well. Parents have a real choice of schools for their children and relationships with the special educational service are very good. Children and young people access a good range of recreational, arts, sport and leisure opportunities, although some young people still believe that cost limits use.

## Making a positive contribution

**18. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good.** Services have been developed well to meet local need and combine very well to support the social and emotional development of children and young people. Intervention programmes that focus on aspects of play and relationships are particularly effective in helping children's and young people's emotional and social development. Initial work to challenge and promote anti-racism is a model of good practice. The effectiveness of training and support for peer mentoring is variable. Children and young people are routinely engaged in consultation; they have been well prepared for this level of involvement and make a full contribution through



strategic forums leading to the shaping of services. Children and young people of Black and minority ethnic heritage are well supported in school and aspects of integration are good. Multi-agency work to reduce anti-social behaviour, offending and re-offending is generally good, although impact is variable. First-time offending is lower than similar areas, re-offending is reducing and specific initiatives targeted at local trouble spots are leading to reduced crime. However, there remains a problem with young people's misuse of alcohol in certain areas. School exclusion and attendance rates are improving. The council's commitment to looked after children is a strong feature; there are opportunities for them to make their views known and they have helped to shape services. Support for care leavers is particularly good. Opportunities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good and their views have helped to shape some council services. Services meet their needs in most cases and transitions are well managed, including most of those to adult services, although these options are limited.

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

**19. The contribution of all local services in helping children and young people to achieve economic well-being is good.** Childcare provision reflects well the employment patterns of parents and carers in Hartlepool, with an appropriate number of childcare places available in the evenings and weekends. Almost all Key Stage 4 pupils, including young people who are in special schools, take part in a wide range of beneficial work experience. Within the last two years, a wide range of good initiatives have been implemented to engage young people who are at risk of leaving education without any qualifications, some of whom have challenging behaviour or are disadvantaged by a family history of long-term dependency on the benefit system. All partners collaborate well to ensure that 14–19 provision more closely meets the interests of young people and supports the development of courses which reflect business growth in Hartlepool. However, the monitoring of participation and progression for more vulnerable groups, such as young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and care leavers, is insufficient. Although the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training has improved, it remains high, as is the case for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The authority has utilised regeneration projects well to provide a range of education and training opportunities for young people. Most vulnerable young people, including young parents at risk of homelessness, ex-offenders and care leavers, gain adequate access to supervised or semi-independent housing. Many aspects of the care leaving service, more especially the pastoral and emotional support, is good, but too many care leavers progress to employment without further training. The quality of learning support offered by the education and training providers for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is at least satisfactory, with some good provision.

## Service management

20. **The management of services for children and young people is good, as is the capacity to improve.** There is a powerful commitment to achieving the very best for children and young people. Leadership is good and there is exceptional unity of purpose. There is a strong sense of shared priorities and ownership by schools and external partners. Engagement with children and young people is excellent. Priorities clearly reflect the outcomes of consultation with children and young people, parents and carers. There is consistency in planning at all levels and plans are of high quality. However, medium term financial planning is under-developed. Priorities explicitly identify children and young people from Black and minority ethnic communities as a vulnerable group, and there are some good examples of support for them. Positive action is taken to deliver key priorities, such as improving educational attainment, prevention and inclusion.

21. The quality and extent of partnership working is outstanding. There is effective use of the community and voluntary sector. Political and managerial leadership is strong, and scrutiny is increasingly focused on key issues. The universal level of staff commitment, enthusiasm and pride is outstanding. Overall, there is good value for money and good improvements are being made, but benchmarking of costs is not embedded in management practice. Schools are very satisfied with almost all services and the support they receive. Overall, their response to the schools' survey is the best in the country. However, there are deficiencies in ICT provision to schools and in the social care software system. There are very thorough arrangements for performance management in place at partnership, elected member, corporate and departmental levels. However, there are deficiencies in management information available to social care managers, which should be overcome with implementation of a new software system. The involvement of service users in performance management is not as well developed as other aspects of consultation and engagement.

## 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	3		
Capacity to improve	3	3	
Children's services		3	
The education service		3	
The social care services for children		3	
The health service for children			2

## Recommendations

### For immediate action

- Develop inter-agency guidance in relation to thresholds for referrals to children's social care.

### For action over the next six months

- Improve the quality of provision for children and young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties in order to meet their needs.
- Improve the quality of provision for pupils excluded from secondary schools and the rates of reintegration into mainstream schools.

- When the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) is reviewed, a high-level assessment of the financial implications should be incorporated.
- Undertake benchmarking of costs on a systematic basis.
- Improve joint commissioning and contracting arrangements in relation to out of authority placements for looked after children.
- Engage service users in the evaluation of services they receive on a systematic basis.

#### **For action in the longer term**

- Improve the provision of occupational therapy and speech and language therapy services.
- Develop a wider range of courses for post-16 young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

## **Main Report**

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

22. **Outcomes for children and young people in Hartlepool are good.**

23. **Children and young people are generally healthy.** Most children and young people who responded to the survey conducted as part of the inspection reported positive views of feeling quite or very healthy. Parents, carers, children and young people are provided with good information, advice and support. Teenage pregnancy rates are falling but remain above the national average. Deaths of babies around the time of birth, infants in the first year of life and children up to the age of 15 are all in line with the national average. Immunisation rates have improved and are now around the national average. The reported incidence of measles is low. Oral health is good. Access to CAMHS is good for most young people and admission placements are appropriate. The healthcare of looked after children is good, with 95% having had annual health and dental checks in the last 12 months. Healthcare for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is generally good, but there is a lack of capacity in some therapy services.

24. **The combined work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good, and Hartlepool is a safe place for children and young people to live.** Almost all children and young people responding to the inspection survey feel safe in school and in their local area. Few serious injuries occur on roads and an effective road safety education programme has reduced the numbers of those slightly injured. Agencies work effectively together to provide prompt identification and safeguarding of children at immediate risk of significant harm, including children with learning difficulties

and/or disabilities. These children receive a service from a specialist team with appropriate knowledge and communication skills. Child protection arrangements are well managed and effective practice means that the number of children whose names remain on the register for more than two years is lower than in similar authorities, while re-registration rates are also low. However, more children are referred to initial child protection conferences and this is reflected in slightly higher numbers on the register. Most initial assessments and almost all core assessments are completed on time, but data in relation to their numbers is unreliable, although the council is taking appropriate steps to address this. All children in need who are on the child protection register and those looked after are allocated to a qualified social worker. A wide range of preventative support is offered in Hartlepool. Fewer children are looked after than in similar authorities and they live in safe and mostly stable placements. Almost all looked after children have annual health assessments, and numbers who contribute to their statutory reviews, while lower than similar authorities, are improving. Numbers of children adopted from care and the timeliness of achieving this are very good, and better than similar authorities.

25. Looked after children and young people feel safe in their placements and are able to report their concerns. Their carers receive good support, training and rewards, but there are not enough local placements, so some children are placed at a distance. Children's cases are regularly reviewed and their participation in reviews is improving. Prospective adoptive families, and children for whom the plan is adoption, receive an exceptional service, although the adoption panel does not have adequate legal and administrative support. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support. That promotes their inclusion. There is good partnership working for children with complex needs, but aspects of management and funding are preventing further integration.

26. **Children and young people achieve highly.** Almost all children and young people surveyed enjoy their education and feel they are doing very or quite well at school. The overall quality of childcare is in line with the national average. The quality of nursery education is at least satisfactory overall and more is good than found nationally. Children enter the initial stage in school with much lower than average abilities in key areas of learning. Pupils' standards of attainment are in line with those in similar authorities and national averages at age seven. Pupils at age 11 perform above those in similar authorities in English and mathematics and the progress they make during their primary school education is well above that of children nationally. The majority of pupils aged 16 achieve five or more good GCSEs, in line with national averages, in 2006. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more good GCSE passes including English and mathematics is lower, but improving. Boys' achievement remains a concern, as it is nationally, but, at ages 11 and 16, schools are successful in narrowing the gender gap. The majority of vulnerable pupils, including those from Black and minority ethnic communities, children looked after by the council and young people with learning difficulties and/or

disabilities, achieve well when compared to their starting points and in comparison to similar groups nationally.

27. The proportion of schools causing concern to the council has reduced and is now low. The number of primary schools failing to meet the Government's targets for English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 has fallen significantly from eight to one over the last three years. All secondary schools met the Government's minimum targets at the end of Key Stage 3 and for GCSE achievement in 2006. The numbers of permanent and temporary exclusions of pupils has fallen in both primary and secondary schools, but the number excluded from secondary schools was slightly above the national average in 2005. Although the majority of pupils permanently excluded from school receive the hours of education to which they are entitled, a small number do not, and the percentage of children and young people re-integrated into mainstream schools remains too low. Attendance has improved and is now above national averages in primary and secondary schools while the rate of unauthorised absence remains low and below national averages.

28. **Children and young people have a good range of opportunities to make decisions and take personal responsibility and many make a very good contribution to their communities.** Most children and young people, including those looked after by the council and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, have the necessary skills and confidence to comment on and influence issues that matter to them. Almost all school children have been actively involved in the democratic process leading to the appointment of school council members and the UK Youth Parliament representative. All school children and young people involved in various participation forums are well prepared. They are bright and articulate and listen to others before arriving at a decision. They support and represent the views of others well and are becoming increasingly confident in their role.

29. Children and young people benefit from positive relationships with workers. Young parents and young carers are enjoying the support they receive and are gaining in confidence as a result. Children from Black and minority ethnic groups are achieving well at school and like living in the area. Children and young people are engaging with the programmes that exist to reduce anti-social behaviour, offending and re-offending. However, some young people are drinking excessive amounts of alcohol on Friday and Saturday nights. The number of first-time offenders is below that in similar authorities, and re-offending rates have reduced consistently over time and are now in line with similar areas. Opportunities to celebrate children and young people's successes are used well, with some very good examples for those who are looked after by the council. Care leavers are particularly pleased with the support services they receive and are very positive about their in-care experiences, although some have low aspirations for further and higher education. Children and young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities enjoy good levels of support to help them participate in decision making.

**30. Children and young people are increasingly able to achieve economic well-being and most are well prepared for working life.**

Outcomes for almost all young people have improved to good levels, with most above that of similar authorities or at national averages. For a small number of young people, however, outcomes are satisfactory or low. Participation rates of young people in education, employment and training have improved, since 2004, from below to above the national average, which is good. Participation rates in work-based learning are also good. Success rates for Levels 1, 2 and 3, including work-based learning courses, is satisfactory, with some good success rates on A-level courses. Almost all Key Stage 4 pupils gain good work experience, including young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. All schools provide a satisfactory range of vocational courses and a good range of enterprise activities.

31. A significant number of young people have benefited from a wide range of good education and training courses through regeneration activities. Care leavers' participation in education, employment and training is satisfactory, but too many progress to employment without further training. Almost all these young people live in decent housing. The participation of young offenders in education, employment and training is low and below the national target. The proportion of young people who gain Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications by the age of 19 is satisfactory, but too many leave education and training at the age of 18, and do not progress to Level 3. Progression rates to higher education are low. The number of 16 to 18 year olds whose whereabouts is unknown has significantly reduced to below the national average. The number of young people who are not in education, employment or training, especially among young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, has reduced but remains high.

## **The impact of local services**

### **Being healthy**

**32. The work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good.** A good range of universal and targeted services helps parents and carers in keeping their children healthy. Access to childcare facilities is good and provided flexibly to meet identified needs. Health visitor contact rates are high. Very good multi-agency working is seen in the SureStart programmes, which promote healthy lifestyles for parents and pre-school children, particularly engaging those from hard to reach groups. A particularly good example is the Mams To Be course for pregnant teenagers. The level of smoking during pregnancy has reduced, and targets have been met, but is still high compared with the national average. The incidence of low birth weight is in line with the national average. Breastfeeding is actively promoted, and again health targets have been met, although initiation rates remain low. Immunisation rates have improved to around the national average. There is a good, targeted health visitor service for travellers. The particular needs of Black and minority ethnic families are well addressed through, for example, a

SureStart project located in the Salaam Centre where a wide range of support, including health education, is provided for Asian families.

33. There is a well coordinated approach to promoting healthy lifestyles for children and young people. All schools are enrolled in the Healthy Schools initiative and at the time of inspection a creditable 29% had achieved New Healthy School status through meeting increased criteria. School nurses have begun to implement a good obesity strategy and are delivering comprehensive smoking prevention and cessation programmes in primary and secondary schools. Good programmes of drug, alcohol and sex education are delivered in imaginative ways in school and community settings, such as a mobile Youth Support bus which is well used and highly rated by users. Contraceptive services, including emergency hormonal contraception, are widely available and well publicised. There is a good forward-looking action plan aimed at tackling the high teenage pregnancy rate. Surveys indicate a good level of understanding of the factors important in living healthily, with some evidence that knowledge has been translated into practice in relation to healthy eating. There are good opportunities for sport and exercise, such as the popular FAST project football teams and the West View project involving young people in orienteering. Positive surveys show that a large majority of children and young people consider themselves to be quite or very healthy. Universal health screening is in place and all general practices offer child health surveillance. Access and waiting times for hospital in-patient and day care are good. Services for children in hospital are generally satisfactory, apart from the arrangements for emergency surgery highlighted in the Healthcare Commission Improvement review. The environment for day-case surgery is very good. There is good outreach provision through a hospital-based community paediatric nursing team.

34. A comprehensive self-assessment exercise has been undertaken to inform a new mental health strategy for children and young people. The length of wait for new cases to access CAMHS is satisfactory, though some parents say there are issues in relation to the timing of appointments and cancellations at short notice. Training and support provided by primary mental health workers for front line staff in health and other agencies are good. There are direct referral pathways agreed with various agencies, including the youth offending service and Connexions. There are good examples of services for young people with drug or alcohol problems, such as the Straightline project for young people found in possession of alcohol, which involves a multi-agency approach including the police, the A&E department and school. A positive survey shows that 96% of children and young people rate their lives as quite, or very, enjoyable. Management protocols for children and young people who self-harm are well developed and clear. There is a good diagnostic service for young children with possible autistic spectrum disorder. Transition of young people with mental health problems to the adult service is not always smooth as it lacks a specific policy.



35. There is a designated nurse for looked after children who, with help from the designated doctor/s, provides an excellent service undertaking and arranging health assessments and follow-up health care. Most health assessments are undertaken where children and young people live, enabling a user-friendly service and affording the opportunity for advice on other matters, such as sexual health and healthy living. The assessment service is also available to care leavers, and the nurse runs useful drop-in sessions for vulnerable young people living in supported housing. The nurse also provides good support and advice to carers; her input is very highly valued by looked after young people. Assessments are of good quality and are regularly reviewed. For looked after children who live outside Hartlepool, the nurse liaises with her counterparts in other areas to try and ensure an equally good service in relation to their health care needs. Looked after children and young people enjoy priority access to CAMHS and receive a good service.

36. The Care Coordination programme provides a good multi-agency approach to needs assessment for children under five who have learning disabilities. Care plans are developed and regularly reviewed, with good involvement of parents/carers. The process is now being rolled out to include children and young people up to the age of 18 years. The provision of short-break care and other family support for this group of children and young people is good. There is good clinical provision to meet their physical health needs, but this is not always well coordinated. There is no dedicated service for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities within CAMHS, which can result in a poorer service to families caring for children with the most challenging behaviour. The learning disability nursing service supports families well, but does not yet have sufficient help from a specialised psychiatrist or psychologist. A much appreciated social inclusion programme enables these children and young people to improve their health through a wide range of sport and leisure activities. The Healthy Schools project has an approach tailored to the particular needs of this group. Parents report an overall shortage of therapy services, with those that are available having long waits; this is particularly notable in respect of speech and language therapy and there is no paediatric occupational therapist. Some parents report difficulty in accessing appropriate equipment, including wheelchairs, for their children. Transition from paediatric care to adult health services is adequate but requires further development to provide a seamless progression.

### **Staying safe**

37. **The combined work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good.** Almost all children surveyed for this review and who were interviewed during inspection said that they feel safe in school and in their local area. Good action is taken to ensure that children and young people and carers know about key risks to their safety and how to deal with them, and good quality information is available in a number of community languages. However, less information is available for children and young people in relation to the risks posed by some adults. Initiatives, such as the school-based Crucial

Crew programme, are appropriate, well focused and targeted, and the Safer Hartlepool Partnership's fire safety programme provides secure medical cabinets for storage of medication.

38. Policies and systems to identify, assess and manage risk of harm are sound and most staff are well supported and trained. Health and safety assessments of facilities are rigorous and good advice is provided. The council and its partners have, through the contributions by young people, rightly prioritised bullying in the CYPP and have strengthened coordination and monitoring arrangements. However, some young people are still concerned that the effects of mentoring schemes are short-lived and that school-based anti-bullying schemes are not always fully confidential.

39. There is an impressive and comprehensive response to domestic violence, and all organisations, including the LSCB and Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), accord this a high priority. Incidents of domestic violence are routinely reported and appropriate responses are made. Innovative schemes are in place, such as the outreach pilot between North Tees Women's Aid and the police, which is increasingly having a positive impact on numbers of women and children supported.

40. Families and children in need of support and children and young people at risk of harm are effectively supported. A good and creative range of preventative services, including those commissioned from the voluntary and community sector, are well coordinated through the Hartlepool Intervention Panel. Staff are mostly well informed about this provision; however, the online directory requires further work to make it easily accessible, especially for children and young people.

41. All agencies understand their role in keeping children safe, and children at risk of harm or in need are suitably referred and their cases promptly investigated. The generic social care duty service provides a valued screening service, within which thresholds for the involvement of social care are appropriate and consistently applied. Good multi-agency communication means that thresholds are mostly well understood, but a lack of specific written guidance increases the risk of inconsistency. Initial referral, assessment and case transfer arrangements are safe, timely and well managed. The quality of assessments varies from adequate to good, but some case records do not analyse risks effectively or reflect fully the quality of practice. Appropriate action is being taken to replace the council's electronic data system, which does not routinely provide sufficiently reliable data to support the effective performance management of services to vulnerable children. All children in need, those on the child protection register and looked after children are appropriately allocated to a qualified social worker.

42. Agencies work well together to safeguard children; inter-agency safeguarding policies are comprehensive and have been recently revised and reissued in accordance with government guidance. Child protection

arrangements are sound. Meetings to review the cases on the child protection register are well attended and robustly managed. The length of time for which children's names remain on the register has also reduced. Parents and carers are appropriately involved in plans to safeguard their children, but their experiences are not used in the development and redesign of services. Arrangements for Criminal Records Bureau and other vetting checks are adequate and improving. Most files seen during the inspection comply with statutory requirements and firm action has been taken to ensure that outstanding checks are completed.

43. Staff and carers receive at least satisfactory guidance and training within their own agencies and within multi-agency programmes; training and support for designated staff in schools and health settings is sound. A comprehensive approach to progressing the Common Assessment Framework incorporates a good focus on change management and the accreditation of learning. Children's services staff are well supported by their managers and have access to good quality and regular supervision. Their work is regularly and consistently audited, but these audits have yet to fully address the quality of practice.

44. The LSCB is well led, has appropriate representation and is effectively linked to other strategic groups. Good attention is paid to enabling committed members to contribute effectively, but the LSCB has not yet secured sufficient permanent funding or capacity to undertake its wider safeguarding role, or to strengthen multi-agency training and quality assurance processes. Serious case reviews are appropriately and thoroughly undertaken and action plans are effectively implemented. However, reviews are not always completed within required timescales and arrangements for producing independent overview reports are underdeveloped. Children's services staff use MAPPA to make an appropriate contribution to the Tees-wide arrangements for managing offenders who pose risks to children.

45. Information sharing is well managed and prompt action is taken to make sure that children do not become lost in the education or care system or when moving across local authority boundaries. Sound policies are implemented to ensure that all children have a school place and attend school regularly; for some young people, targeted group work has improved their attendance and given them a more positive view of school.

46. Proactive and well-resourced inter-agency support and protection enable children and young people to remain safely at home. Children are not looked after until all alternative avenues have been explored and so there are lower numbers of looked after children than in similar authorities. Decisions in relation to becoming looked after are made by managers at the right level of seniority.

47. Children and young people in foster care feel safe and are well cared for by carers who receive good training and rewards. However, there are insufficient placements to meet local needs, so some are placed a considerable distance away. Placement stability is good and children who have settled in out

of area placements are enabled to remain there. Looked after children, including those placed out of area, are reviewed regularly and participation in reviews has recently improved to an acceptable rate with the introduction of the Viewpoint software. Looked after children told inspectors that they are able to report concerns about their care and treatment and enjoy a good independent advocacy service, although the children's complaints service is only adequate.

48. Kinship care placements are a regular feature, as extended family systems are common; these placements are now assessed and supported by the Family Placement Team to the same rigorous standard as other foster placements. Good action has also been taken to begin to identify, support and review children in private foster care. The Adoption Social Work Team provides an excellent service to prospective adoptive families, and to children for whom the plan is adoption, although the legal and administrative support to the adoption panel is inadequate. Joint commissioning arrangements are not well developed, and this is significant for Hartlepool as a council with no in-house residential placements.

49. The demand for short-break services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has changed and a review of the reasons for this is underway, with good involvement of young people and their families. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support to access mainstream social and leisure opportunities which promote their inclusion. Parents and carers are offered assessments for services in their own right, in line with legal requirements, but the children's complaints service has not been sufficiently adapted for easy use by disabled children. The funding of placements for children with complex needs is successfully undertaken through good partnership arrangements, but differences in protocols, management and funding arrangements stand in the way of further integration of services.

## Enjoying and achieving

50. **The impact of local services to help children and young people enjoy and achieve is good.** Clear and helpful information is available to parents and carers in brochures through the children's information service and the council website. Good information and guidance is available to parents of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities about the services provided, including how the annual statutory review process works. The parent advice line provides good support and the service is valued by parents who use it.

51. The strategy for early years and childcare is good. The range of early years and childcare provision is targeted appropriately at areas in most need. There are sufficient places for those parents who require them. Good advice and information is on offer from the children's information system about the availability of places to give parents and carers sufficient choice. The quality of provision is improving. For example, the quality of childcare has improved due to more effective quality assurance, good support and training. Foundation

Stage training, and support for meeting the needs of all young children, is increasingly effective. Early years and childcare providers value the good range and quality of advice, training and support.

52. There have been good improvements in the attainment of pupils aged 11 and 14, and at a faster rate than the national average. Exam results for 16 year olds have continued to improve at an impressive rate over the last three years and the gap to the national average has been closed. However, the percentage of 16 year olds achieving five good GCSEs at grades A\*–C including English and mathematics, is too low compared to the national averages.

53. The council's strategy to support schools and intervene when necessary is very good. It is based on an excellent analysis of need and very good use of data. Partnership working with schools is highly effective and well planned, and targeted support and intervention is reducing the numbers of schools causing concern. The quality of leadership and management and educational provision inspected since September 2005 is good in Hartlepool. No schools are currently in Ofsted categories of concern. The council has taken effective action with schools causing concern. Experienced headteachers and advanced skills teachers are used to give effective support to other schools facing challenges.

54. The council has thorough and accurate data about the achievement of pupils across the borough. This information is used well with schools to target support and has resulted in increased attainment at Key Stage 2 and very good improvements in the percentage of pupils achieving five good GCSEs. The council is also making good use of the national strategies for primary and secondary education to improve educational performance for 11 and 14 year olds. Pupils' attainment has improved in schools receiving targeted support, particularly in narrowing the attainment gap between boys and girls at key points in their schooling, although as is the case nationally, more remains to be done.

55. The council has made good progress to reduce surplus places in schools, and planning for Building Schools for the Future is thoroughly integrated with plans to respond to declining pupil numbers. Admissions procedures prioritise places for children looked after by the council and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Nearly all parents get a place for their children at their first-choice school. There is appropriate guidance to parents for admissions to schools.

56. Attendance in primary schools has remained similar to the national average and that of other similar areas. Secondary schools have worked hard to improve attendance, with the result that absence levels are lower than those found nationally and unauthorised absence is well below the national average. Targeted and coordinated support and intervention by the attendance service and behaviour support programme, as well as encouraging parents not to take holidays in term time by negotiating a discount scheme with a local travel agency, have brought about this good performance. No pupil was permanently

excluded from special schools in 2004/2005 and the number of pupils with statements of special educational needs excluded from mainstream schools has also reduced significantly. The percentage of pupils permanently excluded from secondary schools remains too high and the rate of reintegration of permanently excluded pupils into mainstream schools is too low.

57. Almost all permanently excluded pupils get full-time education, but for a very small number of pupils the provision is not yet adequate. Concerns exist about the overall quality of provision at the pupil referral unit, coupled with the challenging nature of some pupil's behaviour. Protocols are in place to support managed moves and hard to place pupils, but as yet have not made sufficient impact. The council is aware of and shares these concerns. A constructive debate with headteachers about the way forward is underway as part of the developing Hartlepool Education Improvement Partnership.

58. The range of provision to support pupils who are unable to attend school is mainly effective. The home and hospital tuition service and the support for pregnant school girls are good. The monitoring of provision for children educated at home is thorough. The provision for pupils with statements of behavioural, emotional and social difficulties is under review and the council is aware of the need to improve the current arrangements which are unsatisfactory at present.

59. There is a good range of recreational, arts, sport and leisure opportunities for children and young people, including those looked after by the council and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The accessibility of these opportunities is good overall, particularly for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Schools provide a comprehensive range of family learning, study support and extended school activities. The community and voluntary sector makes a valuable contribution to improving the enjoyment and achievement of young people.

60. Looked after children are supported very well in their education and, although their attainment is low at the end of some key stages, they make better progress at age 11 than looked after children do nationally. Their attendance at school remains low but is improving and currently no looked after children are permanently excluded. The council makes strenuous efforts to ensure that children and their carers are involved in setting and reviewing the targets in their personal education plans, or the individual education plans of those with special educational needs. Most looked after children have good quality personal education plans. Every school has a designated teacher for looked after children and the council ensures there is good training and support for this role.

61. There is excellent support to enable pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to enjoy their education and achieve. Statements of special educational need (SEN) are timely, well written and meet needs, with parents and pupils involved in their development and review. The quality of information,

advice and support from SEN services to early years and childcare settings and schools is very good. Early identification and action ensure that support is targeted to young children who require it. Schools make good use of quality provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The achievement and progress of pupils with SEN is good. The council's commitment to inclusion is reflected in the high proportion of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are educated in mainstream schools; those who are not are educated in local special schools that meet their individual needs very effectively. Arrangements for the dual registration of children with SEN enable the two special schools to work supportively and flexibly with mainstream schools without the necessity for all children to have a statutory statement. Parents are very supportive of these arrangements and spoke highly of their choice of schools and the high quality of curriculum and extra-curricular activities available for their children as a result.

### **Making a positive contribution**

**62. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good.** Children and young people's social and emotional development is promoted effectively through early years settings and schools. Services have been developed to meet local need and agencies work well together to deliver effective responses. There is a wide range of opportunities for children and young people and parents to access support. Many of these programmes are of the highest quality. Mentoring schemes and parenting skills programmes which focus on developing aspects of play and relationships are particularly good at improving outcomes for some of the most hard to reach and at risk children. Actions to reduce bullying are embedded in school practice. The effectiveness of training and support to peer mentors is variable and therefore confidentiality is sometimes an issue.

63. Children and young people who face significant change and challenge in their lives are provided with good levels of support. For example, work with young parents, children who have witnessed domestic violence, and behaviour management programmes are all particularly effective. Support for Black and minority ethnic children and young people with their education and some aspects of integration are good. Some excellent work has taken place in challenging racism. Transition support through early years, primary and secondary schools is a strong feature. Learning mentors in schools and services for young carers are well developed. The youth service is providing a range of effective programmes, for example, work to raise awareness of sexual health and targeted work with specific groups such as deaf children.

64. The council has a strong commitment to encourage children and young people to participate. The Participation strategy provides a sound basis for this work. All agencies are committed to this agenda and are progressively empowering children and young people. Effective forums exist for local issues to be heard and prioritised from across the borough. The views and aspirations of children and young people are demonstrably helping to shape services. For

example, Young Voice ideas to provide solutions for reducing children and young people's anti-social behaviour have been implemented. Overall, children and young people who represent others demonstrate good social adjustment and responsible citizenship. Children and young people of Black and minority ethnic heritage are included in participation forums.

65. There is good multi-agency work to reduce anti-social behaviour by children and young people, for example, the Hartlepool Intervention programme and the Youth Inclusion programme. Improved school exclusion and attendance rates are having a positive impact. New methods of community policing are effective. Intervention programmes are well targeted and involve a broad range of coordinated activities, including family-based programmes. There is good take-up by young people of the community services provided, for example, youth clubs. The FAST football programme is effectively targeting and engaging hard to reach young people and supporting their social and emotional development. The youth service is working with many vulnerable and hard to reach young people. The relationships between workers and children and young people are good and attendance by young people is sustained over time. However, there are no concessionary rates for children under 16 to use mainstream sports and leisure facilities. There are problems with young people's misuse of alcohol in some communities, where interventions such as the community warden scheme have had limited effect.

66. Action to reduce offending and re-offending is good. Youth justice board targets are being met consistently in most areas. Action taken by the police to evaluate impact is good and there is evidence that community and neighbourhood policing initiatives are reducing crime in specific areas. The youth offending service provides a good range of activities and reparation projects for those young people who offend and are at risk of offending. Work with families and individual young people is particularly effective, helping to reduce offending behaviour and raise children and young people's self-esteem. The support to meet the mental health needs of children and young people is effective. Good arrangements are in place to support offenders on release from custody. Young people who have served their sentence are supported well in the community, resulting in good outcomes. Educational and training support to meet the needs of children and young people working with the youth offending service is variable. Work to support those over 16 years into employment, training and education, and mentoring schemes to support engagement in education for young offenders, are underdeveloped.

67. The council has a strong commitment to the involvement of looked after children. Corporate parenting is a strong feature. Opportunities for looked after children to make their views known are good and young people are helping to shape services, in particular placement stability. Participation in both statutory reviews and aspects of care planning has improved. The participation officer has helped looked after children to have a voice and develop their skills and confidence in speaking out. Young people have access to a good independent advocacy service. Representations made by young people are considered and



acted on. Looked after children's successes are being celebrated, leading to raised self-esteem. Arrangements for looked after children to have contact with their families are good. The support for care leavers is particularly good, including aspects of transition, and young people value the very good support provided by workers in the team. The aspirations of some care leavers for further and higher education is low, while the effectiveness of the complaints process is limited.

68. Opportunities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make a positive contribution are good and their views have shaped some council services. For example, a DVD produced by young people at Catcote Special Needs School has helped to break down barriers in the community and raised the confidence of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Aspects of integration are good, for example, day care services and participation in the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. The involvement of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in education reviews is good and they benefit from a full programme of social outings, including out of school activities and community leisure pursuits. Good provision is available to support disabled children and their families. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with severe communication difficulties cannot use the complaints procedure; Viewpoint software is being enhanced to enable this. The transition process to adult services is well managed in most areas, but service options are limited.

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

69. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good. Children and young people are prepared well for working life.** The authority's childcare strategy is very effective in removing barriers to employment and training for parents and carers. A wide range of good childcare provision, such as day care, sessional care, out of school day care and regulated child-minding provision, reflects the employment patterns in Hartlepool well. For example, with employment patterns in the call centre sector, the authority has been very successful in supporting childcare providers to offer more flexible provision, such as drop-in childcare and childcare provision in the evenings and weekends. Childcare provision, including respite care, for the carers of young people aged 5 to 18 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is good. A comprehensive range of information on childcare, childcare cost, health, financial support and employment is available to parents and carers. Partnership working between Jobcentre Plus, children's centres and voluntary and community venues that provide childcare is good in offering advice on employment and training opportunities. The range of family learning opportunities is satisfactory and is helping carers and parents to progress to training or employment.

70. A wide range of good strategies and initiatives prepares young people for working life. All schools provide a range of vocational subjects, which increasingly offer better progression routes to post-16 education and training. Almost all Key Stage 4 pupils, including those in special schools, take part in a wide range of beneficial work experience such as computer repairs. Learn2work, an education–business link organisation, and the schools collaborate well to provide activities for young people to gain an understanding of business and enterprise. In one special school, a wide range of enterprise and work-related projects provide particularly good and interesting opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A significant number of young people benefit from the arrangements to attend local colleges for part of their studies. The overall impact of these arrangements has improved achievement rates at Key Stage 4 and increased participation rates in post-16 education and training from below the national averages to above. Within the last two years, a wide range of good initiatives has been implemented to engage young people who are at risk of leaving education without any qualifications, have challenging behaviour or are disadvantaged by a family history of long-term dependency on the benefit system. Some of these young people improved their personal skills and self-confidence by spending part of a week with employers and the remainder of the week in school. In two schools, however, there are still too many young people who leave without gaining any qualifications. Advice and guidance for young people in schools is generally satisfactory, but for a few this advice is not sufficiently comprehensive.

71. The strategy for 14–19 education and training is effective in improving participation and success for young people. The Tees Valley LSC and the authority collaborate well to ensure that the provision more closely meets the interests of young people, for example, through the detailed analysis of 14–19 provision and by supporting the development of new courses that reflect the business growth in Hartlepool. Four groups take responsibility for implementing the various aspects of this strategy, including raising standards, staff development and quality assurance. Collaboration between Hartlepool College of further education and Catcote School has been effective in developing good provision for young people with moderate to profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This provision offers learners the opportunity to develop independent living skills in addition to basic vocational skills. However, the monitoring of participation and progression for the more vulnerable groups, such as young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and care leavers, is insufficient. The progression of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to work-based provision is low. Although the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training has improved, it remains high for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Connexions, the authority and other partners have been very successful in significantly reducing the number of young people whose whereabouts are not known. Young people have satisfactory access to provision at pre-entry and entry level.

72. A significant proportion of regeneration funds is allocated specifically to improve the education and employability of children and young people. Financial resources, including the neighbourhood renewal fund and the new deal for communities fund, are used effectively to provide very well-resourced learning centres within two of the most deprived areas. The authority has recognised the significance of regeneration projects in helping young people to gain training and employment, and good arrangements are in place to provide a range of education and training opportunities for young people. The authority has good strategies to consult the local community and the level of involvement of young people is good.

73. The authority is in the process of implementing plans to improve the availability of decent housing in general. Currently, the arrangements with the private and social housing sectors are generally satisfactory in providing a range of housing for young people. However, the sharing of up to date housing information between partners is insufficiently developed. Most vulnerable young people, including young parents at risk of homelessness, ex-offenders and care leavers, gain adequate access to supervised or semi-independent housing. However, at times there is insufficient appropriate accommodation for vulnerable young people, with some use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

74. The support for care leavers to achieve economic well-being is satisfactory. Many aspects of the care leaving service, more especially the pastoral and emotional support, are good. While the authority and Connexions are working well through a number of projects and initiatives to support these young people, too many leave education or training too early. There is effective support from all relevant agencies to help looked after children or young people who have substance dependencies, young parents or those who are involved with the youth justice system. The effectiveness of the care leaving service is compromised by the fact that its location is not readily accessible to the young people, and not within proximity of other services which these young people need to use.

75. The quality of learning support offered by the education and training providers for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is at least satisfactory, with some good provision. Connexions provide effective guidance for these young people. They have a good level of involvement in discussions to ensure better coordination of their education, health and social care support. The take-up of direct payments is low despite a user-friendly approach. The arrangements for transition planning are good, with appropriate representation from the relevant agencies.

### **Service management**

76. **The management of services for children and young people is good.** Ambition is good. The council and its partners provide excellent leadership for children's services. There are clear and challenging ambitions for children and young people in Hartlepool, a strong shared commitment to them

and an exceptional unity of purpose. The community strategy places a strong emphasis on children and young people. Vision and ambitions are set out well in the CYPP and key outcomes for children and young people are incorporated in the Local Area Agreement.

77. Children and young people have been effectively engaged in an extensive consultation process about aims and priorities, and a children and young people's version of the plan was produced by Hartlepool Young Voices, a group of young people supported by Barnardos. There are two young people on the Local Strategic Partnership and they are well supported. There is further representation on the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. Children and young people feel confident that their aspirations and views are taken fully into account.

78. Prioritisation is good. Key priorities are clearly set out in the CYPP and there is a strong sense of shared priorities and ownership by schools and external partners. Strategic partnership meetings, for example, demonstrate an embedded pragmatic approach to committing resources across agencies. The approach to engagement of children and young people is excellent. There has been an extensive process of consultation with large numbers of children and young people, and intensive engagement with a smaller number, particularly through Diamond 9, a process of facilitated discussion leading to identification of priorities. The priorities clearly reflect the outcomes of consultation with children and young people, parents and carers and these are taken as the starting point for the CYPP. There is extensive ongoing consultation with children and young people underpinning children's services planning and decision making, including involvement in the appointment process for the Director, Assistant Directors and many other posts, as well as feedback on how their engagement can be made even more effective.

79. The CYPP incorporates a clear high level action plan and is underpinned by high quality lower level plans containing three-year priorities and a one-year action plan. There is consistency in plans at all levels. Resources are allocated appropriately to priorities, but medium term financial planning is underdeveloped as there is no reference in the CYPP or some key lower level plans to their financial implications.

80. The needs of Black and minority ethnic children and young people are prioritised and acted on effectively. The CYPP identifies this group as vulnerable, alongside looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are examples of good support for BME children and young people, for example, through the Salaam Centre and the Ethnic Minority Achievement Team.

81. There is good evidence of robust action to deliver key priorities. This includes excellent support for improving educational attainment in schools, widespread adoption of a preventative approach and a very effective approach to inclusion. These actions have had a very positive impact.

82. Capacity to deliver outcomes for children and young people is good. The fact that Hartlepool is the second smallest unitary council has been turned into a significant strength rather than a weakness. The quality and extent of partnership working at all levels in all outcome areas, and the strong personal networks which exist across all sectors, are outstanding. There is effective use of the very extensive community and voluntary sector. The exceptional quality of partnership working contributes significantly to the high quality of provision in almost all service areas.

83. There is very strong commitment to delivering the best possible services to children and young people from key elected members, such as the Mayor, portfolio holder and Scrutiny Forum chair. There are good reporting arrangements and clear roles, good leadership and appropriate challenge. The Corporate Parenting Forum is strengthening the input from children and young people and becoming more focused on the achievements of looked after children and their recognition. The contribution of the Scrutiny Forum is improving. Good engagement with children and young people is to be enhanced by direct representation of six young people on the forum. It is becoming more focused on making an impact on important issues.

84. There is good senior management capacity within the children's services department. The level of commitment, enthusiasm and pride in staff at all levels in delivering quality services to Hartlepool is outstanding. Vacancies are low. There is strong internal consultation and communication.

85. Overall, good value for money is being delivered and significant areas of overspend are examined rigorously, though benchmarking of costs is not embedded in management practice. Education costs are about average and social care costs a little above average, with mostly good and some outstanding services. The proportion of surplus school places is low and planning is underway to respond to projected longer term reductions in pupil numbers over the next 10 years. The community asset of schools is well recognised; Dyke House is an outstanding example of a community hub, and the inclusive approach to developing Building Schools for the Future proposals is placing benefit for the whole community at its heart. There is some pooling of resources across the five Tees Valley councils, for example, the emergency duty social work service is run by Stockton-on-Tees on their behalf. These all provide better value for money. Overall, management of financial, human and material resources is good.

86. Support for school improvement is strong, and the response to the Audit Commission's schools' survey is outstanding – overall the best in the country – with high satisfaction for 74 of the 76 aspects of support and service.

87. A good start has been made on developing a multi-agency workforce strategy. The Integrated Working Information Sharing programme is a major programme to deliver change, including a multi-agency modular NVQ Level 4 training programme for 550 staff across the sectors.

88. There are some significant capacity issues or deficits, but they are mostly being addressed effectively. There are high school budget surpluses, but the Schools Forum has agreed in principle that a clawback scheme should be introduced and tighter auditing of the use of surpluses has been introduced. High costs of home to school transport for special needs pupils, which are not attributable to the requirements of the excellent provision for such pupils, are being addressed through a corporate transport review. High levels of sickness within children's social care are being addressed by a series of management actions, supported and monitored corporately.

89. ICT infrastructure and support have some important deficiencies. The system does not provide effectively for modern school requirements and the social care system has poor analytical capability. A new children's software system has been purchased and, when fully operational, this should resolve the current deficiencies. The ICT contract is being reviewed to secure improvements but a solution which fully meets schools' requirements may be some time off.

90. Performance management is adequate overall. There are very thorough arrangements for performance management in place at partnership, member, corporate and departmental levels. Performance is reported quarterly to the portfolio holder, and this includes enhanced analysis for certain vulnerable groups and a review of progress with the departmental plan. There is good analysis of school performance, including support for self-evaluation, and effective challenge and support has contributed significantly to improved attainment in schools.

91. There are currently important gaps in performance management in social care, though these should be rectified shortly. There are deficiencies in the management information available to managers, with effective cessation over the past six months. Implementation of the new integrated children's system should provide much improved information. There are, however, several examples of good performance management: detailed reviews of external placements and increased fostering have led to better provision and substantial savings; re-registration rates have been reduced by introducing control points in decision making.

92. Looked after children are involved well in assessing the services they receive. However, overall the involvement of service users in performance management has not been developed in as consistent a manner as other aspects of consultation and engagement.

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

1. The council is performing well overall. Strong political commitment to very effective partnership working has resulted in good outcomes for children and young people. Good levels of safety are maintained and vulnerable groups are generally well supported. There is a satisfactory youth service and the youth offending service is judged as good overall with adequate management.

2. There is exceptional unity of purpose in the authority to ensure that every Hartlepool child matters. Vision and ambitions are set out well in the CYPP, with comprehensive priorities reflecting the Every Child Matters agenda. Key priorities include the continuation of impressive improvements in educational attainment, preventative work and inclusion. Planning is consistent and of a high quality but financial implications are not explicit in plans. There is good value for money overall and very thorough arrangements for performance management.

3. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Health education and provision is generally good, although there is a weakness in the provision of CAMHS to those children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good services are provided for vulnerable groups, especially for looked after children and those with substance misuse problems. There is, however, a lack of capacity in some therapy services, such as speech therapy.

4. The combined work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is good. Nearly all children responding to the inspection survey feel safe and a good road safety education programme has effectively reduced the numbers of injuries. Agencies work effectively together to promptly identify and safeguard those at risk of harm. Good child protection practice has resulted in a high number being removed quickly from the register with low re-registration rates.

5. The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good. Parents and carers receive good support and guidance. Schools are very satisfied with almost all services and the support they receive, while their response to the schools' survey is the best in the country. Standards of attainment are good overall, particularly given the socio-economic issues in the area. Pupil attendance and behaviour are good. A small number of permanently excluded pupils do not receive the level of education to which they are entitled and reintegration into mainstream schooling remains low. Good progress is made by vulnerable groups, including Black and minority ethnic pupils and looked after children. Pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated into mainstream school provision. The high quality of school improvement services has reduced the number of schools causing concern, with

no schools currently in Ofsted categories. Children and young people are able to access a wide range of recreational and leisure opportunities.

6. The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people contribute to society is good. Services combine well to support the social and emotional development of children and young people. Although there are very good examples of promoting anti-racism, members of the Black and minority ethnic groups have limited opportunities to help shape services. Children and young people are, however, routinely engaged in consultation and some do participate in decision making at a high level. Support for care leavers and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, although the effectiveness of the complaints process is limited.

7. The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good. Childcare provision meets the needs of parents and carers, particularly given employment patterns. There is a wide range of beneficial work experience for Key Stage 4 pupils, and partners combine well to ensure that 14–19 provision meets the needs and interests of young people. Monitoring the participation and progression of vulnerable groups is underdeveloped and the specific level of participation in education, employment or training by those young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is too low. Many aspects of the care leaving process are good, particularly pastoral and emotional support, but there are too many young people leaving education or training before completion.