



Joint area review

Hackney 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
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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 (CHAI), 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 Hackney 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 (YOT) inspection and contemporaneous follow-up inspection; and
- 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 one neighbourhood, the Nightingale Estate. It also included gathering evidence on 10 key judgements, selected because of their critical importance to improving outcomes for children and young people in the local area. This included discussions with elected members of the local authority and their equivalents in other public agencies, officers from these agencies, service users and community representatives. A review of case files for children and young people receiving support from a number of local agencies was also included.

Context

7. Hackney is a borough in the East End of London which contrasts starkly with the wealth of the adjacent City of London. It has a population of 210,000 and is one of the most ethnically diverse and socially deprived areas of the UK. Every ward in the borough is among the 10% most deprived wards nationally and overall the borough has the fifth highest average Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score in England. Unemployment rates are high at 11.9% and average incomes are low. Means-tested disability benefits support approximately 40% of families. More than 59% of residents live in social housing but the condition of over half of these homes is below the National Decent Homes Standard. Private and rental housing conditions are equally poor. There are also high levels of homelessness and overcrowding. Crime rates and the fear of crime are high. Poor skills and attainment levels, high mobility, a weak transport system and poor environmental conditions all contribute to the inequalities and poverty suffered by many residents. The borough qualifies for Neighbourhood Renewal Funds and European Structural and Social Funds. Plans to locate the Olympics in Hackney Wick should bring additional opportunities for regeneration and development.

8. Approximately 35% of the borough's residents were born outside the UK and 57% belong to Black and minority ethnic groups, although the latter rises to more than 80% in terms of the school population. The borough is home to well-established Caribbean and Turkish communities as well as a substantial proportion of more recent arrivals from Africa, including Somalis, Nigerians, French-speaking West Africans and Ghanaians. A small Chinese community and a significant Vietnamese community have been established in the borough for many years. There is a large, well-established Orthodox Jewish (Charedi) community in the north of the borough. More recently, the borough has seen the arrival of many refugees and asylum seekers as well as a substantial Muslim community and new migrants from Eastern Europe.

9. Hackney is unusual in that the Secretary of State for Education and Skills in 2002 directed Hackney Borough Council to enter into a contract with a new, independent body, The Learning Trust, to perform its educational functions because of the serious underperformance of education services. The trust is a

non-profit-making company, established specifically for this purpose and has a 10-year contract. The Learning Trust is run by a board of directors and has an independent chair appointed by the Secretary of State in consultation with the council. The Trust has a chief executive officer but the council retains the statutory function of chief education officer, which is discharged by its chief executive. The council also retains ownership of school sites and employs schools' staff but day-to-day management of staff is carried out by The Learning Trust. The council's children's social care functions, the youth service and the Youth Offending Service have been restructured into a children and young people's directorate. As from January 2006, the Chief Executive of The Learning trust has been seconded to the council, for part of his time, to undertake the role of Interim Director of Children's Services to lead the development and initial implementation phase of the children and young people's plan (CYPP) and the establishment of children's trust arrangements.

10. The borough maintains two nurseries, 54 primary schools, nine secondary schools, five special schools and three pupil referral units. One academy has been established in the area and a further four are planned. There are 17 centrally registered supplementary schools. Reflecting the overall level of deprivation in the area, 39% of pupils in primary schools and 38.6% in secondary are entitled to free school meals. Of the pupils attending Hackney schools, 25% have special educational needs. English is a second language to 54% and 47% of primary and secondary pupils respectively. There is a high degree of mobility within Hackney schools. At each Key Stage, a significant minority of pupils sit National Curriculum tests or examinations without having been in the same school for the entire Key Stage. This applies to 15% of pupils at Key Stage 1, 30% at Key Stage 2, 15% at Key Stage 3 and 5% at GCSE.

11. The council and The Learning Trust are working with the London East Learning and Skills Council to implement their 14-19 strategy in partnership with colleges, training providers and schools. Post-16 education and training is provided by a general further education college, a sixth form college, three secondary schools with sixth forms and a range of work based learning providers. The work based learning partnership, Learning for Growth, represents four Hackney based providers and three in the neighbouring borough of Tower Hamlets. Overall, Hackney residents follow work based learning programmes with some 54 different providers. Education to Employment (E2E) provision is offered by two local and three neighbouring providers. Adult and community learning including family learning is provided by The Learning Trust.

12. Hackney's children and young people's social care services provided directly by the council comprise dedicated teams for family support services, children in need and children looked after by the council, including those leaving care. An additional service for looked after children includes adoption, fostering and access to resources teams. Referrals to mainstream services are received by the four duty and assessment teams, based at Morning Lane, with further duty social work services offered by the hospital social work team based

at Homerton Hospital, and the Children with Disabilities Service based at Albion Grove.

13. About 470 children and young people are looked after by the local authority at any one time, with 138 placed in agency foster care or residential placements. Some 241 looked after children are placed outside the borough. There are 155 children and young people on the child protection register.

14. Primary care is provided by the City and Hackney Teaching Primary Care Trust (PCT). Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is the main provider of acute health services. Barts and the London NHS Trust provides services to both Hackney and the surrounding boroughs. Mental health services are provided by the East London and the City Mental Health NHS Trust which also provides services to Newham and Tower Hamlets. The trusts providing health services for the children of Hackney, with the exception of the London Ambulance Service NHS Trust, fall within the North East London Strategic Health Authority. Hackney comes under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Police Service with an operational command unit which is coterminous with the borough.

Summary Report

Outcomes for children and young people

15. Outcomes for children and young people are improving from a historically low base and are adequate overall. A context of significant deprivation, together with high rates of movement of families in and out of the area, creates significant challenges to services. The council and its partners have established firm foundations for improving outcomes further.

16. As is the case nationally, almost all children and young people who attend school describe themselves as healthy or very healthy, and children and young people in the area are generally healthy. They are increasingly involved in health promotion programmes. Rates of initiation of breast feeding are high and the proportion of expectant mothers smoking during pregnancy is below the national average and declining. Rates of under fives having first contact with health visitors are high. Although immunisation rates are improving gradually and there has been a reduction in rates of infant mortality, outcomes in both these areas continue to be below average. The incidence of teenage pregnancy is reducing but is still significantly higher than elsewhere in the country. Rates of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV are also high. The health of looked after children is looked after well.

17. Children and young people are generally safe. They and their carers are well informed about risks to their safety and there has been a significant reduction in accidents and unplanned hospital admissions. All child protection cases are allocated to a named social worker and all children on the child protection register are visited within statutory time scales. The council's

response to referrals does not always match published eligibility criteria. This has been recognised by the council, which continues to take action to minimise risk to children and young people. A comprehensive range of family support services is supporting children in need from wide ranging ethnic and cultural backgrounds well, with good collaboration between agencies. Numbers of children on the child protection register are reducing. Looked after children are well cared for and careful attention is paid to matching children's ethnic and cultural needs within placements.

18. The achievement of children and young people is improving and is adequate overall. Effective targeting of resources is having a positive impact on the progress of all pupils and of specific identified vulnerable groups, including looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good after-school provision and local arts, music and sports programmes extend the recreational activities available to young people. Many young people feel, however, that there are insufficient activities of their choice in their local communities. Some young people who move into the area during Key Stage 4 do not have sufficient access to appropriate learning opportunities.

Increasingly, children and young people are making a positive contribution to the area. They are consulted effectively about developments in their communities and schools. They are tolerant of other cultures. Individuals benefit from the good range of counselling and family services. There is an active youth parliament, although young people with disabilities and younger children are not sufficiently well represented. Well-targeted action, including in schools, is supporting a reduction in anti-social behaviour. Although crime levels are falling in Hackney, too many young people offend and then re-offend.

19. Participation in education, training or employment at age 16 is adequate. Many young people, however, move or change courses between the ages of 16 and 18 and what they progress to is not known. Overall, the number of young people not in education, employment or training is declining slowly but continues to be higher than national and regional averages. The attainment rates for GCE A-level qualifications are in line with similar areas but remain below national averages. Overall success rates on vocational courses are improving and are in line with national rates. Effective regeneration has taken place in some neighbourhoods but suitable housing is in short supply for families and young people. Payment of leaving care grants is sometimes delayed.

The impact of local services

20. The council and its partners have put firm foundation in place for improving children's services further but recognise that improving outcomes from a low base in an area with significant deprivation is a long term task. The leadership provided at the senior level is effective and is based on a thorough understanding of the needs of the area. The impact of local services overall in improving outcomes for children and young people is good.

Being healthy

21. The work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. There is a good range of universal and targeted services to promote healthy lifestyles. Outreach and community-based services to engage hard-to-reach groups are effective. Maternity services provide good general and specialist midwifery care to vulnerable mothers. Accident and emergency paediatric services at the Homerton Hospital are good. Mental health services are very effective and provide specialist clinic services and a range of interagency community services. Partnership working between different agencies is strong. Community services including the health visiting service, school nurses and specialist community services have been extensively reconfigured in line with the development of children's centres and extended schools. This has reduced waiting lists and promoted better uptake of services. While jointly commissioned speech and language therapy services are good, care provision for children with disabilities is fragmented.

Staying safe

22. The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is adequate. Work to provide children and young people with a safe environment is good, with a 59% reduction in accidents and a significant reduction in unplanned hospital admissions. A police officer is based in all secondary schools. All schools have policies to reduce bullying and children have been involved in their development. Arrangements for identifying missing children are adequate. The Learning Trust's missing children's protocol does not identify responsibilities and time scales for taking action at key points. The City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board (CHSCB) has been established and all services are working to pan-London child protection procedures. Health and education child protection lead personnel are actively engaged in leading their areas. Children and families services are supporting families well and numbers on the child protection register are decreasing. Threshold criteria for access to social services and child protection, although appropriately set, are not always interpreted consistently. The standard of administration and file management is also inconsistent with some poor practice. The council does, however, have extensive quality assurance systems, which identify areas of weakness and capture the information required to achieve improvement. Services provided for looked after children are good. There is insufficient co-ordination of support for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the transfer of young people to adult services is not managed well.

Enjoying and achieving

23. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good. Good partnership working is improving provision and educational opportunities for children and young people. Performance data is used well to identify areas of greatest need and target resources. From a low base, both

attendance and achievement are improving and gaps with national trends are closing. Good approaches to promoting self evaluating schools and challenging under performing schools have a positive impact on improving provision. A high proportion of schools operate an extended day, offering children opportunities for additional support and recreational activities. Supplementary schools extend the opportunities for children and young people from specific ability or ethnic groups. The attainment of looked after children is above that found nationally and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Parents and carers have access to information and effective support but many families do not get their first choice of secondary school. Some young people moving into the borough during Key Stage 4 have insufficient access to full-time education. The youth service currently fails to provide adequate and sufficient provision for young people aged 13-19, but recent developments demonstrate that it has good potential to improve.

Making a positive contribution

24. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. There is much involvement of children and young people in local planning and decision-making. In schools and youth settings, effective action is being taken to develop children's and young people's social skills. The Learning Trust has played an important role in raising the aspirations of the young people of Hackney. Activities which provide good opportunities for wider social development are well attended, particularly in music and the arts. A good range of services has been commissioned to support children and young people and their families when they are facing challenges. The strong commitment to partnership working between the police and other agencies to address anti-social behaviour and offending has resulted in some notable improvements. The Safer Schools Partnership and collaboration to improve the YOT are examples of this. However, although crime levels are generally falling, rates of offending and re-offending remain high. Multi-agency working to support the transition to adult services for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is just beginning. The services for looked-after children have been strengthened and are supporting an increase in the proportion attending reviews. While there are very good examples of participation by children and young people in consultation and improving services, young people with disabilities and younger children are under-represented.

Achieving economic well-being

25. The combined work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is adequate. Childcare provision is expanding in line with demand but cost continues to be a barrier for some families. The council and The Learning Trust have worked well with a wide range of partners to develop a clear and ambitious 14-19 strategy and to improve 16-19 education and training. The range of provision to help prepare 14-16 year olds for further education, employment and training is improving.

There are, however, insufficient courses in some employment sectors to allow young people to progress through different qualification levels within the borough. The information, advice and guidance young people receive about the range of training and education opportunities available to them are satisfactory and good use is made of education maintenance allowances. Participation of young people in education and training at age 16 is improving, but the proportion of young people between the ages of 16 and 18 who are not in education, employment and training is significantly higher than average. There is insufficient co-operation between Connexions, the youth service and colleges to ensure that support and guidance is appropriately targeted to this group. Young people leaving care are well supported although the payment of Leaving Care Grants is some times delayed. These young people are just as likely to continue in education, employment or training as their peers. There is insufficient support for young people leaving the youth justice system and progression rates to education, training or employment are low. Provision for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate for those with low-level needs, but poor for those with complex or profound needs. The supply of suitable housing for families and young people is improving from a very low base as a result of council actions but the quality of accommodation continues to be poor overall. The council is establishing a management organisation to increase the rate of improvement.

Service management

26. The management of services for children and young people is good. A coherent vision for improving outcomes for children and young people is clearly set out in the draft CYPP. Partnership working is strong and there are challenging but realistic ambitions for children and young people. Needs have been carefully analysed and gaps and underperformance in services identified. Partners are working well towards establishing a children's trust arrangement. A well thought out communication strategy is ensuring that the council and its partners give clear and consistent messages to stakeholders and staff. The Learning Trust has improved the leadership and management of education services resulting in almost all services being good with effective performance management arrangements. The council's performance management system is not sufficiently well embedded in some areas such as children's social care duty services, the youth service and youth offending service. Both the latter services have suffered historically from ineffective leadership and management. The council has recognised these weaknesses and is taking appropriate action. Improvements to the YOT have included the appointment of a new manager for the service but it is too early for these changes to begin to have an impact on re-offending rates.

27. The capacity to improve is good based on The Learning Trust's clarity about what needs to be done, the strengthened leadership and management in place and improvements achieved from a low base in many areas.

Grades

Grades awarded:

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

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

Recommendations

For immediate action

- Prepare and implement a clear action plan to address weaknesses in the council's response to referrals to social care services and file management.

- Ensure every opportunity is given for children to be seen alone when assessments of children in need are being undertaken.
- Ensure prompt payment of financial support to care leavers.

For action over the next six months

- Ensure a consistent and coherent performance management system is in place across all services.
- The council and its partners should develop a clear strategy and specific initiatives to reduce the proportion of young people who are not in education and training and the number of young people whose destination is not known.
- The Learning Trust should update its missing children's protocol to identify responsibilities and time scales for taking action at key points.

For action in the longer term

- The council and its partners should develop multi-agency arrangements for assessing the needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for providing co-ordinated services to both them and their parents or carers including arrangements for respite care.
- The council and its partners should establish protocols for sharing information and tracking vulnerable transient children who become known to one of the statutory agencies.
- The council and its partners should reduce the dependency on young carers and increase the range of support they receive.
- Through the work of the young people's participation group, the council and its partners should develop a coherent strategy for feeding back the outcomes of consultations and for the increased participation of groups currently under-represented on consultative and local democratic forums.
- Develop a coherent 14-19 curriculum offer that provides good progression opportunities including progression into the growth areas for local employment.

Main Report

Outcomes for children and young people

28. **Outcomes for children and young people in Hackney are adequate.**

29. Significant social deprivation, high crime rates and a history of poor outcomes create a challenging context for children's services in the area. Outcomes remain low overall in comparison with national trends but are improving in most areas, although offending and re-offending rates are notable exceptions. The council and its partners know the area well and are realistic but ambitious about the need for further improvements. They have established a firm foundation for achieving further improvements and recognise that improving outcomes from a low base is a long term process.

30. **Children and young people are generally healthy.** As is the case nationally, almost all children and young people who attend school described themselves as very healthy or quite healthy. Feedback from looked after children also indicates that they feel healthy. Children, young people and carers receive good advice and support on general and mental health matters. Almost all schools have been recruited to the National Healthy Schools Programme well ahead of the national target. The proportion of expectant mothers smoking during pregnancy is significantly below average and declining. Breast feeding initiation is significantly above the overall rate for England. Although there have been improvements in immunisation and infant mortality rates, they continue to be below average. The incidence of teenage pregnancy is reducing but it is still significantly higher than average. Hospital admission rates for gastroenteritis are higher than the average for the region. The highly effective model of care used artificially inflates rates of emergency admission to hospital for respiratory tract infections and asthma. Rates for under-fives having first contact with health visitors are high, as well as the proportion of general practitioners (GPs) participating in health promotion programmes. Rates of dental decay for children aged 14 and under are lower than average. The quality of healthcare has improved significantly for looked after children and is good, but there is insufficient co-ordination of care for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

31. **Children and young people are generally safe.** Information provided to children and young people and their carers about risks to their safety is good. There has been a significant reduction in accidents and unplanned hospital admissions. Children and young people have good access to the police through their schools should they need it. There is good and increasing achievement in completing initial assessments of risk to timescale, although completion rates for core assessments are lower than they are nationally and for comparator authorities. All child protection cases are allocated to a named social worker and all children on the child protection register are visited within statutory time scales. The council's response to referrals does not always

match published eligibility criteria. This has been recognised by the council, which continues to take action to minimise risk to children and young people. Numbers of children on the child protection register are reducing through improved family support services. All children on the child protection register and looked after by the council have an allocated social worker. A high proportion of looked after children participate in their reviews and almost all feel safe within their placements. Placements for looked after children are recruited and made with good attention to matching children's ethnic and cultural needs. The percentage of looked after children placed in foster care is above average, and that of comparator authorities, and placements of children in residential settings is decreasing. The percentage of children placed for adoption is high although there are delays in achieving adoption orders. There are also delays in discharging care orders for those children who return home.

32. Children and young people achieve adequately. Educational standards are improving from a historically low level. Although the achievement of many children is below that found in similar areas at the age of seven, 11 and 14, it is in line with these areas by age 16. High rates of pupil mobility and a much higher than average number of children with English as a second language affect on achievements in national tests in the borough. Despite this challenging context, progress made by many groups is good and many young people believe they do quite well or better at school. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups identified as underachieving receive targeted support and they make good progress. Children looked after by the council achieve higher standards by the age of 16 than found elsewhere. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress against targets set for them. Attendance levels are improving and in the secondary schools attendance is now above the national average. More children and young people are excluded from school than elsewhere, but the number of permanent exclusions from primary and secondary schools is reducing. Not all young people moving into the area during Key Stage 4 achieve as well as they could as they do not have sufficient access to appropriate learning opportunities.

33. Children and young people have a good range of opportunities to make decisions and take personal responsibility and the majority make a good contribution to their communities. The development of children's and young people's personal and social skills is good and their aspirations are being raised through the actions of The Learning Trust. Children and young people take an interest in their local environment and are tolerant of other cultures. Individuals and families benefit from the wide range of counselling and support services available. Where school councils are well established children and young people make an excellent contribution to their school community. Youth parliament and youth forum members are enthusiastic and ably fulfil their role, although activities and voting mechanisms have not yet involved young people with disabilities and younger children sufficiently well. Children and young people appreciate the services offered through the exceptional Safer Schools Partnership and well-targeted action is

supporting a reduction in anti-social behaviour. While overall crime levels are falling, young people generally, and specific groups in particular, are over-represented in some crime statistics. Rates of re-offending are too high and not enough supervised offenders are in education and training. The number of looked-after-children who contribute to their reviews is rising. Transition to adult services for some young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is made difficult by insufficient coordination of services.

34. Young people are adequately prepared for working life and the majority are able to achieve economic wellbeing. Increasing numbers of young people participate in education or training after Year 11 and the participation of young people from vulnerable groups, including looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is good. The proportion of young people aged 16 to 18 who are not in education, employment or training is declining slowly but continues to be high in comparison with regional averages. Many young people change courses at age 17 and what they do next is not known. Overall achievements for learners following GCE A-level qualifications are in line with similar areas. Whilst the progress made by young people following these programmes relative to their prior attainment is good in the sixth form college, many make poor progress in some school sixth forms. Learners' success rates at the further education college are improving and are in line with national averages at intermediate and advanced levels but below at foundation level. At the sixth form college, success rates for vocational courses are below average. Progression to further education, employment or training from the Entry to Employment programmes is satisfactory. The completion rate for apprenticeship frameworks is poor. The overall proportion of 19-year-olds who gain qualifications at intermediate level is improving but, at 51% in 2005, is well below the national average. Effective regeneration initiatives are improving children's and young people's life chances but many families and young people do not have appropriate housing.

The impact of local services

Being healthy

35. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Services are working together well to improve health outcomes in an area where social deprivation and inequality set considerable challenges for health and other professionals. Services are prioritised and targeted well.

36. Healthcare support for pregnant women, new mothers and families is good. Partnership working to improve family health and parenting is strong and maternity services are well coordinated. The proportion of expectant mothers smoking during pregnancy is significantly below the England average and declining. Rates of initiation of breast feeding are high. Liaison between agencies to identify women who need antenatal support is effective. The range and take-up of universal and community programmes targeting hard-to-reach

groups are good. Vulnerable mothers suffering from substance misuse and HIV have good access to antenatal support groups and specialist services. There are good specialist services for mothers with mental health needs. Community midwifery services are comprehensive with specialist midwives appointed to reduce health inequalities. For example, a consultant midwife supports teenage parents through Sure Start and children's centres.

37. The Healthy Schools Programme is well developed and effective. The number of people taking up exercise is increasing, but there is insufficient co-ordination of specific new initiatives to reduce obesity. A Healthy Choices Strategy has been developed to address this weakness and improve the co-ordination of new initiatives. Initiatives developed through a strong teenage pregnancy partnership are targeting at risk groups. They are having a gradual impact on high teenage pregnancy and abortion rates and the proportion of terminations performed under 10 weeks is rising.

38. Rates of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV in young people, are high and place large demands on services. Strategies are being implemented to co-ordinate and develop sexual health services and there are some early signs of success. For example, chlamydia screening in 2006 showed rates of infection to be below the national average. Drug addiction services are good and are helping young people overcome their habits. A strategy of community-based detoxification and rehabilitation is working well and is reducing referral rates to specialist outreach services as well as rates of admission to the adolescent specialist addiction intervention service.

39. Community health services including the health visiting service, school nurses, and specialist community services have been extensively reconfigured in line with the development of children's centres and extended schools and offer good universal screening and school-based services. There is a broad range of programmes for promoting children and young people's physical health including for example, support for children with co-ordination difficulties from special educational needs and physical education co-ordinators in schools. Services are accessible with a much higher than average proportion of children under five having contact with a health visitor. A variety of community programmes target hard-to-reach groups such as Black teenage fathers, and refugees and asylum seekers. There is a family welfare service for Vietnamese and Turkish families. Currently, however, there is insufficient co-ordination of different actions to target the physical health of Hackney's highly mobile population. Participation by GPs in different initiatives to promote health is good. Infant mortality rates are above the average for England but there are indications that strategies are having an impact and that rates are declining. The Starlight Accident and Emergency Unit at Homerton Hospital provides an innovative and highly effective model of care through a dedicated children's emergency assessment area, an observation area and an urgent care centre which is managed by the PCT. Immunisation rates are well below national targets. Strategies are being implemented to bring about improvement and health visitors and community nurses now provide inoculations.

40. Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) are very good and include specialist clinic and extensive community outreach services. Interagency communication and engagement is good and partnership working to deliver accessible services in the community is innovative and effective. Examples include a therapeutic intervention service and a family liaison service working within social services to support hard-to-reach families. There is a well conceived parental mental health project working with adult psychiatric services and an early intervention project in schools for parents of children with behaviour problems. Access to specialist CAMHS is very good. All cases are seen well within the national target period. There is no waiting list for specialist CAMHS treatment and all deliberate self-harm cases are seen with 24 hours. The responses of children and parents to questionnaires indicate a high level of satisfaction with the service. Specialist CAMHS nurses provide advice and support to a range of services; these include the YOT, special schools, pupil referral units, the looked after children and adolescent children with disabilities teams and the adolescent specialist addiction treatment service. It is too early to evaluate the impact of this new development, but professional feed back has been very positive and training events have been well attended.

41. There is good attention to the health needs of looked after children. The borough's performance is above national and comparator authorities for completion of regular health and dental checks. Health needs of looked after children placed out of the borough are well coordinated. Foster carers are provided with support and training to promote good health. Therapeutic services prioritise support for looked after children.

42. As has been recognised by the partners, care provision for children with disabilities is fragmented. Access to care is uneven and there is insufficient co-ordination of provision through systematic interagency review and information sharing. The PCT, the council and The Learning Trust have plans to establish a new child development centre to provide integrated services. Speech and language therapy services have already been reconfigured and have had a significant impact on the uptake of services from 300 to 900 cases per year. Occupational therapy and physiotherapy have been successful in reducing waiting lists from several months to weeks. A new child development and disability outreach service funded by CAMHS is meeting local needs well but is already working to full capacity, with a growing waiting list. There is insufficient planning and co-ordination for transferring young people to adult services.

43. Children and young people who rely on services are consulted and listened to. There is also a monthly support group for parents chaired by PCT staff. Suggestions have resulted in developments such as production of regular newsletters to support and inform parents and the joint production of a directory of services for disabled children and families. Parents and children have been consulted and are involved in the planning of the new child development centre.

Staying safe

44. The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is adequate.

45. Information provided for children, young people and their carers about risks to their safety is good. Leaflets and website information are available in a range of languages. Action taken to provide children and young people with a safe environment is effective and road traffic accidents have reduced by 59%. There has been a significant reduction in hospital admissions due to injuries and rates are well below the national average. Children and young people have easy access to police services. The Hackney Safer Schools Partnership has based a police officer in every secondary school. Thorough consultation on combating bullying was led by The Learning Trust and children and young people contributed well to establishing appropriate policies in individual schools.

46. Collaboration between agencies to safeguard children complies with government guidance and is good. The CHSCB was established in May 2005. All services are working to pan-London child protection procedures and staff have good access to training. Health and education child protection lead personnel are actively involved in implementing procedures and are appropriately supported. All schools have dedicated child protection teachers and The Learning Trust provides schools with good child protection advice and support. At the time of the inspection, however, 15 schools had child protection teachers who had not yet completed the required training. Clear policies and procedures are implemented within social services, The Learning Trust and the PCT for safe recruitment of staff. There are good joint protocols for child protection in place between social service, the drug action team and adult mental health services. Sharing of computerised information between agencies is very limited. There was one serious case review during the year of the inspection but no management reviews.

47. The effectiveness of services in establishing the identity and whereabouts of all children and young people aged 0-16 is adequate. The borough has a high transient population with an overall turnover of 30% in general practitioner registrations. Tracking children and young people is an acknowledged priority for the CHSCB. Tracking procedures and a protocol with schools have been established by The Learning Trust but the protocol does not clearly identify responsibilities and time scales for taking action at key points. The PCT keeps paper records of children who access health services but it is currently not possible to cross-check these against school rolls to identify any children who may not be attending school.

48. Weaknesses in decision making at the point of referral regarding access to family support and child protection services have been identified by the council through a comprehensive system of internal and external audit. Threshold criteria are not always interpreted consistently. Whilst there has been recent cross agency training, resulting in increased understanding of each other's

roles, schools also report difficulty in accessing social services for referrals of children requiring high-level family support. Action is being taken to establish a coherent and consistent approach to performance management in duty in order to minimise risk to vulnerable children and young people.

49. There is good and increasing achievement in completing initial assessments to timescale. All child protection cases are allocated to a named social worker and all children on the child protection register are visited within statutory timescales. The child protection conference system is robust and supported by all agencies. New early intervention and family support services are supporting children with complex needs and their families well and the numbers of children on the child protection register are reducing.

50. Standards of administration and file management are inconsistent, with some poor practice. Risk assessments, management decision-making processes and oversight are not always recorded systematically. Service users and other agencies who make referrals are not routinely provided with a written response explaining the action taken or why further action was judged to be unnecessary. Letters to service users are of a variable standard; some are poorly worded and contain inaccuracies.

51. A system of panels operates to provide management oversight of individual cases to ensure consistency of service and compliance with procedures. The council has identified the need to increase the involvement of front-line staff, other agencies and families in the process to improve the consistency of decision-making. Children and young people are not always seen alone when initial and core assessments are carried out.

52. Recruitment and retention of social workers has improved. Reliance on agency staff has reduced from 40% to 25%. There is a comprehensive recruitment process, which pays good attention to the need to recruit a range of staff to work with the diverse population of the borough. Staff induction processes are very good and are responsive to staff's own ethnic and cultural backgrounds and needs. Frequent changes of social workers, however, continue to have a negative effect on support to some children and young people.

53. Services for looked after children are good. Procedures for the placement of looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities which are implemented by the access to resources team are comprehensive. Contracts and the suitability of placements are carefully monitored. Very good attention is given to the matching of placements to children's ethnic, religious and cultural needs. The independent reviewing officer team maintains a strong focus on ensuring that looked after children and young people voice their opinions during reviews. In a recent survey, almost all looked after children reported that they feel safe within their placements. Children and young people who are looked after by the council have good access to advocacy services. The services provided for care leavers are generally good, although

these young people sometimes feel they are not listened to and experience delays in receiving financial assistance, particularly Leaving Care Grants. A 24-hour telephone advice service is provided for looked after young people aged 16 or over and care leavers requiring support. There are delays in achieving adoption orders and the discharge of care orders.

54. The council and its partners have established a disabled children's strategic plan together with transition protocols for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, as yet, no key-worker system or common assessment framework has been introduced resulting in a fragmented service to parents and carers. There is insufficient co-ordination of actions to prevent duplication of assessment, limited respite care, and transitions to adult services are not well managed.

Enjoying and achieving

55. The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and achieve well is good.

56. Strong partnerships between The Learning Trust, schools and local businesses contribute to the improving picture of educational achievement and opportunities for recreation and leisure. The Learning Trust has good evaluation processes and is aware of the main areas for further development.

57. There is a wide range of effective support for parents and carers. This includes comprehensive and high-quality web-based and printed materials. In addition, there is targeted work with those in the most deprived areas or who face the greatest difficulties for example, to help raise achievement or improve behaviour. Parents and carers of young children receive good support at local community centres with opportunities for training and crèche facilities which have been organised in response to their requests and needs.

58. The provision for the youngest children has grown rapidly in recent years and more closely reflects the needs of families and local communities. The quality of early years education is good and children make good progress through the Foundation Stage. Good examples of cross-agency working are improving early identification and support for developing communication skills.

59. The Learning Trust provides very effective support in promoting schools' approaches to self-evaluation. Performance data is used very well to identify weaknesses in schools and underachievement of individuals and groups of children. The action taken to improve achievement is effective, particularly so at the age of 16, and for minority ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Support to schools identified with weaknesses is good and there are no schools identified by Ofsted as requiring special measures. The effectiveness of partnerships across schools promotes the sharing of good practice well. The amount of time allocated by The Learning Trust to each school to promote school improvement is well above that found

elsewhere. This is effective as it is promoting partnership working, consistency across schools and the successful implementation of national strategies. Improved and more formal working arrangements have been introduced to extend the partnership with local supplementary schools.

60. Parents and carers receive very clear guidance on the admissions arrangements for schools. The variety of schools in Hackney, including a high proportion of single-sex and faith schools, limits the choice parents have. Whilst there have been recent improvements, the proportion of parents getting their first choice is still well below other areas. Strategic plans are in place to address the problems and provide more co-educational, local schools in line with parents' wishes in the longer term. The Learning Trust also works well in partnership with academies to improve choices for parents and opportunities for children.

61. Students' attendance at secondary school is now above national averages, although it remains below in primary schools. Attendance of looked after children is better than that found nationally. Overall, the support for promoting good behaviour is effective and the number of children and young people excluded from school is reducing, although exclusion rates continue to be above those found elsewhere. Those permanently excluded are able to access full-time educational provision at pupil referral units. Agreed protocols across all schools, and support packages provided by the pupil referral units, provide opportunities for re-integration of excluded pupils. This is more successful at Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. There are clear protocols for monitoring the provision for children and young people educated at home. A range of alternative provision, including college courses and workplace learning, is available for those without a school place, for example older young people arriving in the borough. However, currently this is insufficient to meet the demand and some young people do not have appropriate access to learning. The arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the provision for this group are not as comprehensive as it is for all other forms of provision.

62. Schools provide good-quality education and a rich curriculum with opportunities for work-based learning. Many are providing additional opportunities for out-of-hours learning. These include activities that expand children's and young people's horizons and provide opportunities for them to develop their skills as citizens. There is an increasing number of arts, music and sports activities. Supplementary schools support specific ability or ethnic groups and extend the opportunities available to them. The needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are considered in the provision offered. However, overall children and young people continue to feel that there are insufficient activities reflecting their needs and interests and there are not enough places where they feel safe to play. Although recent developments show strong signs of improvement, the youth service is failing to provide an effective and sufficient range of provision for the 13-19 age group.

63. Support for looked after children is good and they do better academically than is the case nationally. All Hackney's schools have designated teachers for looked after children. Approximately three quarters of looked after children are educated outside the borough. Not all looked after children have a personal education plan.

64. Hackney schools have a very positive approach to promoting inclusion and there are good arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the progress of most children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Multi-agency working is developing well with for example, speech and language therapists and CAMHs nurses accessible on school sites.

Making a positive contribution

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

66. There is effective action in schools and in some youth work to develop children's and young people's social skills. In recent inspections, all schools were judged to be good or better for pupils' personal development and well-being. Effective action has taken place at Ikburgh and Stormont House special schools to raise the self esteem of pupils. There has been some effective action to improve the use of playtimes for developing social skills in primary schools, although this remains an area for development in some. Many young people attend wider opportunities to develop social skills through events such as the annual music festival. In schools, there is good appreciation of pupils' own and others' cultures. Mentoring is well established in schools and the youth service and is beginning to develop effective peer education approaches in some centres. The numbers of looked-after children who are permanently excluded from schools has fallen and is low. The Learning Trust is taking appropriate and effective action to address the over-representation of Black male pupils in exclusions.

67. Support for children and young people in managing change and responding to challenge in their lives is good. Schools make suitable arrangements for supporting pupils at induction. There is good development of pupils' willingness to take responsibility in special schools. All schools have anti-bullying policies, although not all pupils are sufficiently aware of these, particularly in relation to homophobic bullying. Growing numbers of children and young people are taking advantage of the wide range of counselling and family services offered by the local authority in partnership with voluntary organisations. Hackney drugs action team has developed appropriate substance misuse services for children and young people and their families, including in education settings. There are examples of excellent support services to specific groups, such as young Travellers where the good work with families has resulted in significantly increased attendance at secondary school and raised ambitions for further and higher education.

68. The proportion of young people in local authority care who are not in education, training and employment has fallen, reflecting the improving support structures. A growing number are contributing to their reviews. The support for young carers provided by the National Children's Home young carers project is good, but across the borough the capacity to provide for older carers is insufficient. There is a developing interagency approach to supporting young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at transition. Increasing proportions of them are being supported into education, employment or training. Access to advocacy and respite services is not consistently good.

69. There is much effective consultation with children and young people on community and school developments. Structures for supporting their participation are clear and the approach is firmly person-centred. Children and young people were effectively involved in the planning for the regeneration of Woodberry Down area, for example. Consultation on the children and young people's strategy won national acclaim. The borough police have involved young people well, including those from minority ethnic communities, in consultation over the future of policing in the borough and in leadership and empowerment programmes. Young people have made a good contribution to the development of the borough's anti-bullying policy. There are excellent examples of effective school councils, for example at Baden Powell primary school. The youth parliament has an enthusiastic membership and has engaged young people well, but there is recognition that there is under-representation of young people who are difficult to reach on consultative and local democracy groups. The Young People's Participation Group has identified appropriate actions to develop a coherent approach to providing feedback from consultations, and to provide support to schools to help them make school councils more effective. Young people have not been sufficiently involved in the planning of local youth service activities.

70. Although there are some effective initiatives to involve more young people in voluntary activities, young people sometimes do not know how to find information on these opportunities. There has been a range of effective actions to support the positive contribution of looked-after children and young people. A recent survey showed that a high proportion felt that their views were taken seriously.

71. There is good inter-agency co-operation at a strategic level to address youth offending and anti social behaviour. Where targeted action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour by children and young people, it is effective. The action taken on the Holly Street Estate, for example, resulted in considerably reduced levels of anti-social behaviour. Many young people take part in initiatives to engage young people at risk of offending, including in the youth service's positive activities for young people programme. Crime diversion programmes, such as *Prison Me No Way* have been well received by young people. The Hackney Safer Schools Partnership is an excellent example of effective multi-agency working to increase safety in and around schools. The Learning Trust has played a crucial role in raising children's and young people's

aspirations. Nevertheless, anti-social behaviour continues to make a significant contribution to the high levels of fear of crime across the borough, and too high a proportion of young people offend, and then re-offend. The types of offences committed by youths are too often crimes which result in custodial sentences. Black and mixed race young people are over represented in relation to secure remands. While there has been an increase in the proportion of supervised juveniles in education, training and employment at the age of 16, this proportion remains low, and expectations of this group by some front-line staff are sometimes not high enough.

Achieving economic well-being

72. The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is adequate.

73. A comprehensive range of information on childcare and financial support is available to parents and carers with some information being available in a variety of languages. Take-up of the educational maintenance allowance and other benefits is good. Childcare provision is expanding in line with demand and the early years strategy is an integral part of the overall strategy for promoting economic well-being in the borough. Sure Start provision is conveniently located and clear plans have been established to develop children's centres across the borough in relation to need. Young parents returning to learning receive helpful and detailed information and financial support for childcare. The range of family learning opportunities is satisfactory and is widening participation in education and training. Literacy and numeracy support is satisfactory and is accessible in a wide range of locations including all extended schools and community venues.

74. The level of support provided for young people to help them prepare for work is increasing and is satisfactory overall. Inspire, the local education business partnership has improved the range of work experience opportunities available to young people including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Work-related learning opportunities in schools are adequate but improving, with business mentors providing support for pupils. Advice and guidance provided by Connexions personal advisers to young people in Year 9 is satisfactory. Colleges, work-based learning providers and schools are now collaborating more closely and colleges and work-based learning providers are increasingly involved in schools' options evenings. A range of projects and services are helping young people prepare for working life and to re-engage those who do not attend school regularly. These include pupil referral units, pre- and post-entry to employment projects and a travellers' education service.

75. Participation rates at age 16 are increasing but many young people change direction and courses a year later. The proportion of young people whose destinations are not known to Connexions services remains the highest in East London at over 16% in November 2005. Strategies and systems for tracking and monitoring these young people are not sufficiently well developed,

and there is insufficient collaboration between Connexions services, the youth service and colleges to ensure they receive appropriate guidance and support. Young people from vulnerable groups, including those leaving care and the youth justice system receive good advice and support. Participation in education, employment and training by these groups, other than those leaving the youth justice system, is satisfactory or better.

76. The overall strategy for 14-19 education and training has built effectively on the work carried out in response to the 16-19 area-wide inspection carried out in 1999. It is supported by detailed analyses of the education and training needs of the area. The strategy sets out an ambitious vision and clear priorities closely linked to the building schools for the future programme. Task groups set up by the 14-19 strategic partnership are well supported by stakeholders and are improving the education and training options available to young people locally. A work-based learning partnership represents local providers well. Young people have been consulted about the development of provision and have contributed well to the preparation of a well-designed brochure on all the options available post-16 including programmes in schools, colleges and offered work-based providers.

77. Hackney schools, B6 Sixth Form College, the further education college and work-based learning providers offer an improving range of academic and vocational studies for 14-19 year olds. Stoke Newington School is establishing a construction skills centre with support from the Community College. The schools' partnership for the north of the borough is preparing a joint timetable for advanced level courses starting in September 2006' but few qualifications below are offered by school sixth forms. Although increased provision is planned in three key sectors identified in the 14-19 strategy (hospitality and catering, retailing and warehousing, all of which provide significant employment opportunities), the number of local vocational education opportunities is low. The 14-19 curriculum group has identified the need to provide young people with more progression routes from entry level through to Level 3 in key employment sectors. Local colleges are beginning to work more closely with special schools to develop appropriate programmes for young people learning difficulties and/or disabilities to build on the outcomes achieved in school. There are few programmes locally for young people with complex needs.

78. The council has successfully targeted funding and initiatives for regeneration, as part of its community strategy, to reduce overcrowding and increase the supply of affordable housing. Regeneration and neighbourhood renewal is effectively linked with strategies for improving community services, the environment, social services and community safety. Families and young people are consulted as part of the planning and development of the new estates which provide a much improved environment for families and young people.

79. There is a significant shortage of suitable housing for families and young people. Time spent in hostels and temporary accommodation by families who are unintentionally homeless is reducing but is significantly higher than the average for England. The quality of much of the social housing stock is below the national decent homes standards. Strategies are being implemented to ensure the standards are achieved by 2010. Semi-independent living arrangements for teenage parents and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities are oversubscribed. Risk assessments are carried out and support plans developed with increasing use of other specialist agencies when required. Mediation services are available for young people at risk of being homeless.

80. Appropriate pathway plans are prepared for looked after children and are reviewed on a regular basis. They are well supported by the post-16 team and Connexions in preparing for working life with a higher than average proportion in education, employment or training. Payments to care leavers, including the leaving care grant, are sometimes delayed. As has been recognised by the council, transition arrangements for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities are under developed and co-ordination between agencies is being strengthened. The general further education college has, for example, developed opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities to progress to appropriate learning programmes. There is good support and information for carers on direct payments and the number of families receiving payments has increased significantly during the twelve months prior to the inspection.

Service management

81. The management of services for children and young people is good and the capacity to improve is good.

82. The ambitions the council and its partners have established for children and young people in the area are good and realistic. Leadership at the senior level is effective and firm foundations have been established for improving outcomes for children and young people. A coherent vision is set out in the community strategy for the area and is clearly reflected in the draft children and young people's plan (CYPP) which will be in place from April 2006. The plan is based on a detailed and shared understanding of the level of deprivation in the area, the needs of young people and the challenges they face. Gaps and underperformance in services have been identified and clear and realistic objectives and targets are set out for bringing about improvement.

83. The council and its partners consulted a wide range of stakeholders during the development of the draft CYPP there by building upon the national award winning consultation with children and young people undertaken during the preparation of the 2005 partnership plan '*Hackney - A Good Place to Grow Up*'. The views of children and young people influenced the identification of one of the two major themes in the draft CYPP – 'the need to celebrate our young

people'. Communication of ambitions has been good. A well thought out communication strategy has been implemented by the council and its partners to give clear and consistent messages for stakeholders including councillors and staff. However, although community sector partners have seen an improvement in communication, the council is less successful with its engagement with some black and ethnic minority groups.

84. Prioritisation to improve outcomes for children and young people is good. The vision for the area is articulated as five shared priorities in the draft CYPP with a range of linked targets. Some of these priorities recognise and address issues arising from diversity, such as a specific focus on improving the achievement of Turkish speaking pupils and boys of Caribbean heritage. Priority is also given to providing a range of accessible preventative services taking into account the high level of need in Hackney. Work streams have been developed to deliver the priorities with clear action plans that state lead responsibilities, milestones and target outcomes. There is a clear understanding of the resources required to deliver in most of these areas, though these are not detailed in all plans. Staff are aware of the priorities and how they contribute to their delivery.

85. Capacity to improve within children and young people's services is good. The financial capacity of the council and The Learning Trust is strong, with good financial reporting and monitoring arrangements in place. Political and managerial leadership are also strong, as are levels of commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people. The mayor is actively involved and focussed on strategic development. Councillors' roles and responsibilities are clear and the lead member for children's services will be appointed following the May elections. The chief executive of the council works proactively with partners and provides strong leadership. The leadership and management of The Learning Trust are strong and the chief executive of the trust has recently been seconded to the role of interim director of children's services, with good and clear accountability arrangements in place. The Learning Trust has a strong track record of delivering improvement in education and some other council services have also improved. Prompt, targeted action has been taken in response to previous inspections, for example the YOT.

86. Partnership working is good and has been strengthened significantly during the 12 months prior to the inspection. Partners are positive and committed to delivering good services to children and young people. The children and young people's partnership board has been restructured to deliver the CYPP and clear governance arrangements have been developed. Partners are making judicious use of consultants and external advice and are working effectively towards a children's trust arrangement that is appropriate to local needs. Good partnership working is helping build capacity. For example, the integrated speech and language therapy service has increased access to the services and, due to its innovative service delivery, has facilitated recruitment of key professionals. The council and The Learning Trust have a strong commitment to the building schools for the future programme and are working

together well to bring about improvement. An external review concluded that the project is well run and is expected to deliver significant benefits to secondary and special education in Hackney. However, the capacity and engagement of the voluntary and community sector is under developed, particularly in relation to funding mechanisms.

87. Recruitment initiatives are in place for key professionals and vacancies, particularly for teachers, have been reduced as a result. Difficulties are still being experienced in recruiting qualified social workers and youth workers but the dependency of children's social services on agency staff has been reduced significantly. Training is effective and valued by staff both in The Learning Trust and the council with agency staff in social care having good access to training. Training programmes in health, education and social care are being consolidated to increase capacity and a joint workforce strategy is being developed as part of the CYPP.

88. Value for money is adequate. There is some evidence of resources following priorities, for example in family support services and special educational needs services. Spend is close to upper quartile in Education with high strategic management costs, in the main due to the outsourcing of education. The Learning Trust benchmark their infrastructure spend and have used this to manage their costs more effectively. They have a good understanding of areas of relative high cost and are able to demonstrate in some areas that this has improved the services offered, for example increased investment in school improvement has contributed to no schools being identified by Ofsted as requiring special measures. Spend is in the upper quartile on social services and the cost of services for children looked after has increased and is high. However, the council have a good understanding of these costs with the result that costs are being managed more effectively with the number of looked after children decreasing.

89. The council is developing an approach for ensuring value for money within children's services and has worked well with partners to realise efficiencies through procurement but this is not as yet consistent across services. Although some benchmarking is undertaken, information on costs is limited in some areas such as grants and commissioning with the voluntary sector and in assessment and social work provision costs. There is no commissioning strategy in place but this had been recognised by the partners and is in development.

90. Performance management is adequate. The council's arrangements for monitoring its contract with The Learning Trust are good and there are effective performance management mechanisms in place within The Learning Trust, which have helped contribute to the improvement in educational standards. Although the council has a performance management framework in place, it is not having consistent impact and is not sufficiently well embedded in some areas such as children's social care duty services, the youth service and youth offending services. The youth service and the youth offending service have

suffered from ineffective leadership and management. The council has recognised these weaknesses and is taking appropriate action, but there is insufficient youth provision to meet the needs of the area and improvements in the management of the YOT have yet to impact fully on re-offending rates.

91. The council's children's and young people's scrutiny commission is contributing to service development through some of its reviews, which are rigorous and challenging and contain clear recommendations, for example on the provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The self-assessment demonstrates a good understanding of strengths and areas for improvement. Weaknesses in the youth service were clearly identified but some areas for development in social care were not made sufficiently explicit. The council with its partners is developing joint performance management mechanisms for children and young people's services through its strategic review group and through the work of the local strategic partnership. Progress has already been made over a relatively short period but the council recognise that a robust and effective joint performance management system is not yet in place.

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

1. Overall the council and its partners achieve adequate but improving outcomes for children and young people in Hackney against a background of significant deprivation. Children and young people are generally safe.
2. Leadership at the senior level is effective and firm foundations have been established for improving outcomes for children and young people. A coherent vision for improving outcomes for children and young people is set out in the community strategy for Hackney and is clearly reflected in the draft children and young people's plan. Partnership working is strong and there are challenging but realistic ambitions for children and young people. Needs have been carefully analysed and gaps and underperformance in services identified. Partners are working well towards establishing a children's trust arrangement. Many services are good and are improving outcomes for most children and young people. Almost all services in education are good and performance management arrangements are effective in identifying areas for improvement. Although the Council has a performance management framework in place for other services it is not having consistent impact and is not sufficiently well embedded in some areas such as children's social care duty services, the youth service and youth offending services. Both the latter services have suffered from ineffective leadership and management. The council has recognised these weaknesses and is taking appropriate action but there is insufficient youth provision to meet the needs of the area and improvements in the management of the YOT have been too recent to impact fully on re-offending rates.
3. The Council and its partners have good arrangements for providing children and young people with safe environments. Accidents and unplanned hospital admissions have reduced significantly. Arrangements for establishing the whereabouts of children and young people are adequate. Agencies collaborate well to safeguard children and there are good joint protocols in place between social services, the drug action team and adult mental health services. There has been one recent serious case review. Early intervention and family support services have been successful in reducing the number of children on the child protection register. Through its extensive quality assurance procedures, the council has identified that children and young people referred to children's social services are not always dealt with in a manner that is consistent with the its published criteria for access to social services and child protection services and continues to take action to minimise risk to vulnerable children and young people.
4. Improving educational achievement has a high priority and standards are improving from a low base. The Learning Trust supports schools well and improving educational achievement has a high priority. The quality of early years' education is good and children make good progress through the foundation stage. High pupil mobility and a much higher than average numbers

of children with English as a second language have an impact on test results. Although the achievement of many children is below that found in similar areas at the age of seven, 11 and 14 it is in line by age 16. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups identified as underachieving receive targeted support and make good progress. Children looked after achieve higher standards by the age of 16 than found elsewhere in the country and children with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress against targets set for them. Attendance rates are improving and are above the national average in secondary schools. Exclusion rates are higher than elsewhere but the number of permanent exclusions from primary and secondary schools is reducing.

5. There is much involvement of children and young people in local planning and decision-making and they are consulted effectively about developments in their communities and schools. Effective action is taken in schools and youth settings, to develop children and young people's social skills and they are tolerant of others' cultures. The Learning Trust has played an important role in raising the aspirations of the young people of Hackney. Young people and their families are supported well when they are facing challenges. The strong commitment to partnership working between the police and other agencies to address anti-social behaviour and offending has resulted in some notable improvements. Crime levels are generally falling but rates of offending and re-offending are high. Multi-agency working to support the transition of young people with learning difficulties and disabilities to adult services for is at an early stage of development. Services for looked-after children have been strengthened and are supporting an increase in the proportion attending reviews.

6. Opportunities to prepare young people for working life are adequate. There is a clear and ambitious 14-19 strategy and the range of provision is improving. In some employment sectors however, clear progression routes are lacking. More young people are continuing in education and training but the proportion of young people between the ages of 16 and 18 who are not in education, training or employment is higher than average. There is insufficient co-operation between Connexions, the youth service and colleges to target support to this group. Overall success rates on vocational courses are improving and the attainment rates for GCE A-level qualifications are in line with similar areas but remain below national averages. Young people leaving the youth justice system and those leaving care are well supported and those leaving care are just as likely to continue in education, training or progress to employment as their peers. Provision for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities is adequate for those with low level needs, but there is insufficient local provision for those with complex or profound needs. Effective regeneration has taken place in some neighbourhoods but suitable housing continues to be in short supply for families and young people.