

# Joint area review

**Darlington Children's Services Authority Area**

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Review of services for children and young people

Audit Commission  
Healthcare Commission  
HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate  
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary  
HM Inspectorate of Prisons  
HM Inspectorate of Probation  
Ofsted

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## Introduction

1. The most recent Annual Performance Assessment (APA) for Darlington Borough Council judged the council's children's services as good and its capacity to improve as good.
2. This report assesses the contribution of local services in ensuring that children and young people:
  - at risk or requiring safeguarding are effectively cared for
  - who are looked after achieve the best possible outcomes
  - with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve the best possible outcomes.
3. The following investigation was also carried out:
  - the impact of the partners' 14–19 strategy in improving outcomes for young people and, in particular, those from vulnerable groups.

## Context

4. Darlington Borough is a compact area of some 76.2 square miles, comprising the market town of Darlington and a number of surrounding villages. It is situated in the north east of England and forms part of the Tees Valley sub-region. The borough has a population of approximately 99,500 people living in 45,000 households. Levels of employment are comparatively high by regional and national standards but the average income is well below that found nationally. Levels of deprivation are higher than the national average, although there is a wide variation across the borough.
5. Darlington's population is expected to remain fairly stable over the next decade. Almost 90% of the population live in the urban area. Around 3% of the population are from Black and minority ethnic groups, which is slightly below the proportion found in similar authorities and well below the national average. The proportion of local people of Traveller heritage is much higher than the national average. Because the proportion of children who are looked after or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities within the borough are low, it is not always appropriate to make comparisons with similar authorities or national averages.
6. Pre-16 education is provided by five children's centres, two nurseries, 24 primary schools, three infant schools, three junior schools, six secondary schools, one academy, one special school, one pupil referral unit, 159 registered childminders and 98 private and voluntary early years providers.

7. Post-16 education and training are provided by a general further education college, a sixth form college and one school sixth form. Several local and nationally-based providers are contracted by the Tees Valley Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to deliver work-based learning. At the time of the inspection these providers had a total of 374 learners.

8. Entry to Employment (E2E) is contracted and managed by the LSC.<sup>1</sup> It is delivered by four providers, including the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders and Darlington Borough Council. In the current academic year, 128 young people have engaged in E2E provision. There is no pre-E2E provision.<sup>2</sup> Adult and family learning is provided by the Libraries and Community Learning division of children's services. It is funded by the LSC.

9. Darlington Primary Care Trust (PCT) provides primary health care. Acute hospital services are provided by the County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust. Mental Health Services are provided by the Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Trust. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are based at the Mulberry Centre in Darlington Memorial Hospital. Learning Disability Services are located at Upperthorpe, adjacent to it.

10. Children's social care services are provided by around 70 foster care households and about 100 carers. There are four children's residential homes with a total of 14 beds and a further four-bedded home that provides short-break care for children and young people with disabilities. There are 25 field social workers working in five teams: child care; duty looked after children; care planning; leaving care and children with disabilities. There are no family resource centres. Services to children and young people who are at risk of offending or have offended are provided through the Darlington youth offending service, which is part of the children's services department. There are no secure units or young offenders' institutions within the borough.

11. At the time of the inspection the Director of Children's Services had been in post for one year. The management responsibilities and arrangements for services to children and young people in Darlington had recently been reconfigured and many senior officers and managers were relatively new in post. In 2007, the Connexions service and youth service became part of the partnerships division of children's services and the youth offending service joined the children's and families division.

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<sup>1</sup> E2E is a work-based learning programme for young people aged 16–18 who are not yet ready or able to enter an apprenticeship, employment or further learning opportunities.

<sup>2</sup> Pre-E2E is a full-time programme for young people aged 16–18 to help them to prepare to start an E2E programme, an apprenticeship or a college course.

12. The Children's Trust, which brings together and coordinates all the services for children and young people in the area at a strategic level, is in place and operates as a sub-group of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).<sup>3</sup>

13. A re-inspection monitoring visit of Darlington youth service took place at the same time as the joint area review.

## Main findings

14. The main findings of this joint area review are as follows:

- The contributions of local services to safeguarding children and young people and providing them with a safe environment are good. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is providing effective strategic leadership. Thresholds for gaining access to services are clear and implemented effectively. The quality of assessments and decisions made by professionals are good. Management arrangements and support for professionals are good. The area has taken swift action to tackle issues identified in the 2007 APA letter.
- Local services make a good contribution to improving outcomes for looked after children. Health outcomes are good. Education outcomes are good when compared to similar authorities. Short-term placement stability is good.<sup>4</sup> However, despite some recent improvements, long-term placement stability is worse than similar authorities.<sup>5</sup> The number of children and young people who contribute to their reviews is very good, although they have limited opportunities to contribute to the development of services. Support for care leavers is good and their take-up of education, employment and training is very good.
- The contributions of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are adequate. There is good strategic leadership and school improvement and specialist support services are effective. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have limited opportunities to shape services. The number of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities involved in education, employment or training at the age of 16 is declining. Links with adult

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<sup>3</sup> An LSP is a non-statutory partnership providing a local framework for the public sector, as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors, to work within so that different initiatives and services work together effectively to meet local needs and achieve better outcomes for local people.

<sup>4</sup> Short-term stability is defined as: the percentage of children looked after at 31 March with three or more placements during the year.

<sup>5</sup> Long-term stability is defined as: the percentage of children aged under 16 at 31 March who had been looked after continuously for at least two and a half years, who were living in the same placement for at least two years, or who were placed for adoption.

services are not sufficiently well developed for young people with the most complex needs.

- The partners make a good contribution to improving outcomes for 14 to 19 year olds, particularly those from vulnerable groups. Partnership working across the borough is good and extremely productive. Arrangements to help most young people make the move from school to further/higher education and work are excellent. There is no pre-E2E provision for those 16 to 18 year olds who are not yet ready to start an E2E programme and there is insufficient education and training provision for those young people who have offended.
- Service management is good. The partners' ambition to improve outcomes for children and young people is good and clear priorities have been set for achieving this vision. Areas of previously weak performance such as school attendance and exclusion rates have improved, particularly in the last year. Joint workforce planning is relatively underdeveloped. Driven by strong leadership resulting from appointments and organisational changes made during the last year, and supported by good financial and performance management, the Children's Trust has good capacity to improve further and deliver its programme for change.

## Grades

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

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

## Recommendations

### For immediate action

The local partnership should:

- ensure that an appropriate way is found for the successful dissemination of the findings of this report to children and young people in the area

- work in partnership with the local health commissioners to tackle gaps in health service provision for children and young people with disabilities.

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

- Improve the links with adult services to ensure that all young people with complex needs moving into adult life have good outcomes which meet their needs.
- Ensure that there is sufficient good quality education and training for young people who offend.
- Clarify strategies and implement the actions required to engage more young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in education, employment or training post-16.
- Reduce the number of young people who are not involved in education, employment or training at age 18.

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

- Provide greater opportunities for young people who are looked after and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to influence the shape of services they use.
- Implement the children with disability strategy and monitor its impact.
- Implement the 14–19 strategy fully and monitor its impact.

## **Equality and diversity**

15. The council and its partners have a strong commitment to social inclusion and a clear focus on improving services and outcomes for the most vulnerable children and young people in the borough. This ambition is clearly reflected in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), and the review of the CYPP has refocused priorities in order to narrow the gap between outcomes for the most vulnerable and those for the rest of the population. The LSP has adopted a social inclusion strategy 'All Together' through which it aims to improve services and outcomes for all its citizens. Schools are committed to inclusion. An increasing number of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are educated within mainstream schools. The local authority monitors and reports on the progress of each individual child and young person and uses this information effectively to identify actions needed to target services at the most vulnerable.

16. Families of Traveller heritage, which is the largest ethnic minority group in the borough, have high regard for the support they receive from the council and its partners. This support is particularly effective in relation to accessing



health services and supporting children and young people whose parents elect to educate them at home. Consultation with looked after children, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their parents and carers is currently underdeveloped, although effective action is being taken to ensure that these groups can influence service development at a strategic level. The council has worked with the Race Equality Council to facilitate consultation and engagement with a range of Black and minority ethnic groups and works hard to ensure that the needs of children from minority ethnic backgrounds are met if they become looked after. Consultation has also taken place with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups. The council has achieved Level 3 of the Local Government Equalities Standard.

## Safeguarding



**17. The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people at risk or requiring safeguarding is good.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good multi-agency work to provide early intervention and targeted support for families.</p> <p>Partnership work with children and young people and their families.</p> <p>Sharply focused work to reduce anti-social behaviour and offending.</p> <p>The outstanding contribution made by the police authority to safeguarding.</p> <p>Effective management, procedures and practice for child protection referrals.</p> <p>Impact of the LSCB on issues that concern children and young people.</p>	<p>The high rate of offending committed by young people waiting to appear at court.</p> <p>The high number of children and young people excluded from school.</p>

18. Parents and carers receive good support and advice to enable them to keep their children safe in the home and the community and to promote healthy lifestyles. All households with children receive a 'Parent's Guide' which is available in several languages. This focuses on a range of safeguarding issues and highlights those encountered by vulnerable groups such as young carers.

19. Local agencies, including the voluntary sector and faith groups, work together effectively to deliver a range of activities that promote healthy lifestyles. This includes collaboration between the local authority and the Catholic diocese on developing a programme on sex and relationship education for use in Catholic schools. Although the rate of teenage conceptions remains higher than the national average, it has reduced by almost 25% against the 1998 baseline figure. Strategies have been developed to tackle the high level of alcohol misuse amongst teenagers, particularly girls, but it is too early to assess their impact.

20. The percentage of children and young people involved in traffic accidents is lower than the national average. There has been a 40% reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured in traffic accidents in the borough when measured against the 1998 baseline figure. At the current rate of reduction, the indications are that the local authority is likely to meet the national target for 2010. The strategies used to reduce accidents include improving street lighting, introducing more cycle lanes and organising awareness raising programmes in schools. Progress in implementing the school travel plan has been slow but all schools are now involved in it.

21. Early years settings and schools provide safe environments for children and young people. Regulatory inspections identify that day care and schools perform very well in this area and outcomes for children and young people are good. Staff working with children with disabilities have received child protection training designed specifically to help them deal with the particular issues relating to this group.

22. Some schools have been very slow to adopt the National Healthy Schools Standard and only five out of 39 schools have achieved this status. The council has very recently taken action to accelerate progress and involve all schools in the programme.

23. The authority and its partners place a strong emphasis on providing support for specific groups of young people and their families, including those who are traditionally hard to reach. For instance they provide good early health and parenting support for the Traveller community. Gay Advice Darlington features a popular telephone helpline and a very well used drop-in centre for young people.

24. Actions taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people are good. A wide range of activities is offered to young people to enable them to use their leisure time constructively. Many of them make good use of the Dolphin Centre where they

can participate in a good range of sport and leisure activities and meet in a safe and easily accessible place. The safer schools project has been successful in targeting those at risk of offending and has resulted in a reduction in anti-social behaviour and the high rate of pupils excluded from secondary schools.

25. The youth service is reaching a higher than average proportion of young people and targeted work in hot spot areas is resulting in lower incidences of anti-social behaviour. The youth offending service has achieved an impressive reduction in the number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system from 311 in 2004–05 to 251 in 2006–07, and an excellent reduction in the number of young people who re-offend and receive a custodial sentence. This has reduced by 55% since 2002. However, the number of offences committed by a small number of young people waiting to appear at court has deteriorated significantly.

26. There are effective arrangements for identifying the whereabouts of children missing from care and education. Exclusion rates for pupils in Darlington have historically been among the highest in the country. Specific work to improve managed moves between schools, the implementation of a behaviour action plan and improvements to the alternative education curriculum have resulted in recent rapid improvement when measured against similar authorities.

27. Action to promote young people's mental health is good and improving. Targets for the improvement of CAMHS have been met, expenditure has increased and there is good progress towards a comprehensive service.<sup>6</sup> Identified areas for development, for example building effective links between Tier 1, 2 and 3 services, is being tackled by the introduction of primary mental health workers. Action by the CAMHS in primary and secondary schools to support the improvement in children's behaviour is very good. The co-location of CAMHS specialists and paediatric staff is ensuring quick access to services, for example by children and young people who have deliberately harmed themselves. However, there has been a longstanding problem within the youth offending service which has experienced delayed access to CAMHS for a small number of children and young people who have offended. This has only recently been resolved.

28. Agencies work effectively with children at risk of harm and their families. The police make an outstanding contribution to this work through highly effective partnership working. The number of children on the child protection

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<sup>6</sup> CAMHS delivers services via a national four-tier framework. Most children and young people experiencing mental health problems will be seen at Tier 1. This level of service is provided by practitioners who are not mental health specialists, such as GPs, health visitors, school nurses and teachers. At Tier 2, practitioners tend to be CAMHS specialists, such as primary care workers, psychologists and counsellors. At Tier 3, practitioners are specialised workers, such as community health workers, child psychologists, or psychiatry out-patient services for more severe, complex and persistent disorders. Tier 4 services are provided for young people with the most serious problems through, for example, highly specialised out-patient and in-patient units.

register is low. The rate of children registered for the first time is significantly lower than the national average and for similar authorities. The latest data shows no child has been subject to a child protection plan or remained on the register for more than two years. Multi-agency support for children and families following de-registration is very good. The authority's own information shows it has been highly successful in reducing the rate of re-registrations to 9%. All children on the child protection register are allocated to a qualified social worker and their individual plans are reviewed on time. The number of children on the child protection register from a minority ethnic background is very low, reflecting the composition of the local population.

29. Social care duty arrangements are highly effective. Very good scrutiny by managers of child protection referrals ensures that they are dealt with promptly. Thresholds for gaining access to services are clear and implemented effectively through a very efficient single point referral system. All relevant staff have received good training on the most recent multi-agency child protection procedures.

30. The quality of initial and core assessments is good. They are based on detailed and well-formed analyses which contribute to effective plans and decisions. A strength of the process is the close involvement of parents and carers. The authority has been swift to tackle the need for improvement in the completion rate of initial assessments and section 47 enquiries identified in the APA letter 2007.

31. Effective multi-agency work has contributed to a reduction in the incidence of child abuse and neglect. There is a good range of early support services for children and families, provided by a wide range of services in partnership with the voluntary sector. For example, sharply focused parenting courses and advice on health and other issues. Multi-agency responses to domestic abuse are good. A clear system of notification to the social care duty team via the police ensures that the responses to incidents of domestic abuse are prompt and effective. The successful use of family group conferences has resulted in a better take-up of services by those in need of support and in a reduction in the number of first-time domestic abuse referrals. However, direct work such as counselling support for children and young people is insufficient.

32. Children at risk because of substance misuse by their parents are given good support through effective collaboration between midwives, social workers and the substance misuse treatment service. This ensures early identification and assessment of risk of pregnant women and good post-natal support to enable families to care safely for their children.

33. Good progress has been made in implementing the Common Assessment Framework and a range of agencies have already made use of it. The percentage of referrals of children in need that lead to an initial assessment is very good and significantly higher than similar authorities and the national average. As a result, families receive a range of support packages at an early

stage. Good use is made of children in need meetings and multi-agency support packages are reviewed regularly. Plans have been implemented to provide more focused support through locality teams. This work is at an early stage of development and consequently it is too soon to measure any impact.

34. The LSCB is well established and has an appropriate membership including the voluntary sector. It is providing good strategic direction on safeguarding matters. As the result of a recent self-review, it is now making better use of its resources, for example by focusing task sub-groups more effectively so that it can deliver the comprehensive business plan. In response to feedback from children and young people, the anti-bullying task sub-group has been quick to implement the anti-bullying strategy. This has led to a discernable difference, with young people reporting that issues are now dealt with quickly, support is good, and they feel safe in their schools and the community. Good work has taken place with other local authorities in the region to ensure that action plans from two recent serious case reviews are implemented. This includes better support for schools and better involvement of accident and emergency services for children who deliberately self-harm. Good work has ensured that new practice and guidance is being implemented on time. For example, the Child Death Review Panel is in operation.

35. Effective support to schools has ensured outstanding Criminal Records Bureau and List 99 checks have been completed for all staff employed before 2002. Arrangements for recruiting staff accord with the requirements to safeguard children and young people. The council has established a centralised list of staff directly employed which enables it to record and track progress on checks. Multi-agency public protection arrangements are well established. These contribute effectively to the safeguarding of children from adults who pose a risk to them. The management of allegations against professionals suspected of abusing children is good, with effective monitoring of investigations by the LSCB. Procedure and practice in relation to the management of complaints against professionals are well established and a very low number of cases are currently being investigated.

## Looked after children and young people



36. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people is good.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
Very good health services for children and young people.	The high rate of children and young people who are looked after.

<p>Good access to support to meet the needs of children and young people with mental health difficulties.</p> <p>The high proportion of children who are adopted.</p> <p>Reduction in the number and rate of young people who offend.</p> <p>Good support for care leavers.</p> <p>Very good engagement of young people in education, employment or training.</p>	<p>The low number of children who have been looked after continuously for the last two and half years in the same placement.</p> <p>Too few opportunities for children looked after to contribute to shaping services.</p>
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37. Health outcomes for looked after children are good. A very high proportion of looked after children and care leavers have regular health screening and dental checks. The rate is much better than in similar areas and the national average. The work of the designated nurse is highly valued by children and young people. Healthy lifestyles are promoted effectively and good support and advice is provided for children and young people, foster carers and children's services staff. For example, effective strategies and good partnership work has resulted in very low numbers of looked after children becoming teenage parents.

38. Looked after children have good access to appropriate high quality help and support through CAMHS. For example, the Children Looked After System Project provides good and timely assessment, therapeutic services and specialist training for carers and staff on issues such as attachment and deliberate self-harm. Extensive training and good support provided to foster carers and children's services is building capacity within the residential and foster care service and enabling carers to provide better support for children and young people with multiple and complex needs.

39. There is a high level of commitment to the Corporate Parenting Panel, which meets on a quarterly basis to oversee all matters relating to looked after children. The panel regularly receives information about national policy developments, scrutinises performance information for looked after children and monitors progress on a range of actions including recommendations from external regulatory inspections.

40. Looked after children are served very well and are known individually by an experienced family placement team. Placement choice is very good, with most children and young people placed with the council's own foster carers. There are no external residential placements. The low numbers placed through external agencies are in foster homes. Few children and young people are placed more than 20 miles from their homes.

41. The fostering service was judged good at the recent inspection and carers speak highly of the very good support and training they receive from it. The most recent inspection of the five children's homes identified that the care young people received was good. However, some national minimum standards were not met. The local authority has taken swift action and all identified issues are resolved. For example, the statement of purpose for two homes was changed to reflect their particular role in caring for children and young people. The children and young people inspectors spoke to in the children's homes were very positive about how they are looked after.

42. The proportion of children in Darlington who are looked after has fallen but is still higher than the average nationally and for similar authorities. The council is reducing numbers slowly and carefully, taking care to ensure that the level of risk to the children and young people falls within acceptable levels. The council has used family group conferences to support children at risk of admission to care. This has resulted in increased numbers being placed appropriately with friends and family, although there is no user feedback or external validation to measure the effectiveness of this approach.

43. Short-term placement stability is good when compared to similar authorities. However, the 2007 APA raised concerns about the lack of stability of long-term placements and the local authority is tackling this. The number of children adopted has improved and is now very good. Systems to track and support children in their fostering and adoption placements are good. Nevertheless, despite these improvements the rate of long-term stability remains lower than in similar authorities.

44. There is a very good level of participation of children and young people in their personal reviews. Children and young people spoken to felt that their views were taken into account. All reviews are completed on time and the fact that there is one reviewing officer for all children in long-term care ensures continuity in the provision made for them.

45. Some good arrangements are in place to meet the individual cultural and ethnic needs of looked after children and young people. The Sahara organisation provides very good packages of training and support to meet the different cultural and ethnic needs of looked after children. Effective links with other authorities in the region have resulted in better matching of needs in foster carer placements.

46. Young people spoken to said that they felt safe and protected from abuse and exploitation. They are able to make complaints and report that they are dealt with appropriately. The local authority commissions the National Youth Advocacy Service to ensure looked after children and young people have access to independent advocacy. A high proportion of the looked after children in Darlington come from other parts of the country. However, the provision it makes for them is identical to that of children from within the borough.

47. Good daily tracking of school attendance and a low level of absenteeism is leading to improved educational outcomes for looked after children. The authority's own information shows that the attendance rates of looked after children are better than those for the rest of the school population. The local authority responds rapidly to any emerging problems, for example by quickly finding an alternative school for any looked after children who have been excluded.

48. There is a good focus on the educational attainment of looked after children with individual monitoring regularly undertaken by the education coordinator. Education outcomes are good. Looked after children make better progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 than found in looked after children nationally, and a consistently high proportion achieve one or more GCSE or equivalent passes when compared to similar authorities. Standards at Key Stage 4 have been good for the last two years. The forecast for pupils this year is also good and demonstrates that the gap between the progress made and standards reached by looked after children and the non-looked after population in the borough is narrowing. All children have personal education plans but the quality of these is not always good.

49. Looked after children have adequate opportunities to make a positive contribution to the community. There are some very good projects which promote their involvement. For example, a multi-agency support group for professionals has helped empower young people to raise awareness and express their views on how they want to be looked after. This resulted in young people developing their own DVD, 'Listen to me,' which has been used for training staff and foster carers and presented at national conferences. In addition, some young people have participated in the recruitment of children's services staff. However, the opportunities for children and young people to influence and shape services at a corporate level is at an early stage of development. The Children in Care Council has only recently been established. Looked after young people rarely participate in activities provided by the youth service. Good progress has been made in reducing the number of young people who engage in offending behaviour and the rate is now lower than similar authorities and the national average.

50. Young people in care are encouraged to aspire to further and higher education, and good support and advice is available to carers to help them support young people's ambitions. Consequently, some young people are at university and others are due to enrol. Although the numbers involved are small, the proportion of looked after young people who go on to further and higher education is similar to that seen in the wider population. Support for children's education in schools has been strengthened with specific training provided for key staff and the recent appointment of a 'virtual headteacher' for looked after children.



51. Support for care leavers from the leaving care team is very good. Young people reported positively on pathway planning and the help they receive to move towards independence. The take-up of services by care leavers is good. Their engagement in education, employment and training by the age of 19 is very good and above that of similar authorities and the national average. Good quality accommodation is provided by the housing department and the team have developed 'taster flats' to assess young people's readiness for independence. The borough recently contracted with Barnardos to develop supported lodgings to increase capacity and choice for young people.

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



52. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good strategic leadership and understanding of the action needed to be taken to consolidate and further improve provision.</p> <p>The quality of local specialist services for disabled children.</p> <p>Good progress of pupils with statements of special educational need (SEN) in specialist provision.</p> <p>Good use of management information and performance data to monitor outcomes and target challenge and support.</p>	<p>Not all families/carers of disabled children receive a fully integrated, coordinated service.</p> <p>Limited capacity of some specialist health services.</p> <p>Transition arrangements to adult services are inadequate for some young people and their families.</p> <p>Too few opportunities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to contribute to shaping services.</p> <p>The number of 16 to 19 year olds with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are not in education, employment or training is high and increasing.</p>

53. There are clear aspirations across council services to provide effective, inclusive services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families. Good strategic leadership and a clear

understanding of what needs to be done are influencing developments and promoting the realisation of these aspirations. Developments are securely based on previous good practice but many initiatives are recent or at a pilot stage. Consequently, as yet they are not fully impacting on outcomes and experiences of children, young people and their families. This detracts from parents' and carers' perception of local service delivery.

54. The commitment to improving outcomes for all children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is reflected in the good working relationships established across agencies and good use of management information and performance data to challenge practice and identify areas of future improvement. The management of services and support to schools through targeted work is a strength.

55. Agencies work well together to provide services for individual children or families, although not all families currently receive a fully integrated, coordinated service. Multi-agency working and the integration of services is currently being strengthened through jointly-funded appointments at a strategic level, and the development of clear, transparent protocols for identification, assessment and resource allocation. The draft strategy for children with disabilities has incorporated the views of parents and carers and this is informing an implementation plan.

56. Parents and carers are very well supported by the child development and children's disability teams once they gain access to these services. However, some parents report delays in assessment, long waiting times for some specialist health services and inconsistent responses from speech and language and occupational therapy services. The recent introduction of the Early Support Programme provides a good universal service to identify at birth those in need of further assessment or support. There are good arrangements for assessing parents' needs as carers and they speak highly of the available short break provision. The effective partnership with Darlington Association for Disability, a local voluntary organisation, offers parents good support to apply for direct payments. This increases the range and flexibility of respite options open to them.

57. The local authority is developing its partnership with the PCT, with jointly funded posts at a strategic level. Inequalities in health provision have been identified and action taken to remedy limited service provision. For example, the Talking Time Playbox, a successful project led by a speech and language therapist and educational psychologist, increases providers' capacity to support early intervention and tackle communication and language difficulties.

58. The commitment to inclusive practice is reflected in good local early years provision. Families and children are supported well through private, voluntary or maintained nurseries near to their home. Good support is provided to staff working in settings to extend their skill and confidence in meeting the specific

needs of individuals. When children move to mainstream schools, the transition is usually managed well and parents have confidence in the new placement.

59. Statutory SEN assessment processes are carried out efficiently and all are completed within expected timescales. This illustrates how well health and children's services work together to ensure professional reports are available to inform the assessment process.

60. Many children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are educated successfully in mainstream schools. The proportion matches that in similar authorities, with an increasing number of those with new statements successfully included in their neighbourhood school. The small numbers of children and young people educated out of the borough are those with severe autistic spectrum disorder or assessed as having very challenging behaviour, emotional or social difficulties.

61. Although introduced much later than in most other authorities, the full delegation of SEN funding from April 2008 increases schools' capacity to respond flexibly and creatively to meet needs locally. This way of working is new and yet to demonstrate improved provision or impact on outcomes. Arrangements to monitor and evaluate how well schools use their resources are good and well established. Good guidance is provided to encourage schools to evaluate the impact of their provision. Comprehensive performance data provide a very good basis to discuss the impact of provision and to target resources to improve outcomes. As a result, the number of schools where school inspections judge the progress of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to be good or better is in line with similar authorities and above national figures.

62. Local authority data and school inspection judgements demonstrate that children and young people placed in specialist additional resource bases and the one special school often make good progress. Initiatives to close the gap in attainment between those identified with learning difficulties and their peers during Key Stage 1 are proving effective. Local data suggests that not enough young people identified at school action and school action plus make adequate progress in English during Key Stage 3.

63. Most young people aged 14 and over receive good support in planning for their future and almost all have a statutory transition plan in place as a result. There are some very good examples of agencies working together to support young people to gain appropriate education, employment or training after the age of 16. However, insufficient attention is given to ensuring long-term planning enables the smooth transition of a young person's care and support arrangements as they move from children's services into adult services. In some cases, actions identified in transition plans for young people with more complex needs have not been carried out and the transition to adult services has not been managed well.

64. Provision for 14 to 19 year olds in special schools and college is often good. A particular strength is the 16+ Pathway programme at Darlington College which supports young people moving on to Level 1 programmes and beyond. The opportunities for work-based learning are increasing at a faster rate than nationally. However, an increasing number of 16 to 19 year olds with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not in education, employment or training. The proportion (currently 26%) is higher than that found regionally and nationally. The local authority has identified the need to increase the choice and flexibility of local provision to engage this group, but the 14–19 strategy does not make it clear how this will be achieved.

65. Opportunities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make a meaningful contribution to their reviews and the development of local services are limited and the local authority is beginning to tackle this. A recent pilot developing a person-centred review approach, offers an effective model to involve children and young people more fully. However, it is only being implemented for pupils with statements of SEN in one school. The approach has won the enthusiasm and commitment of local schools, many of which are keen to trial the approach. A specialist advocacy service has been commissioned to ensure that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in residential homes can express their views.

66. The range of voluntary learning and leisure activities available for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate. Voluntary and community groups make a positive contribution to extending the range of activities and youth workers demonstrate significant skill and expertise in engaging individual young people. The Sportability project aims to give young people the self-esteem and confidence to take a greater part in mainstream youth club activities. There is a commitment to extending the range of leisure activities, with improved access identified in local plans.

## Other issues identified for further investigation

### The impact of the partners' 14–19 strategy in improving outcomes for children and young people and, in particular those from vulnerable groups

67. The partners' 14–19 strategy has had a good impact on improving outcomes for all children and young people, including those from vulnerable groups.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
Improved levels of attainment for young people at Key Stage 4.	Significant increase in the number of young people who are not involved in employment, education or training between the ages of 17 and 18.

<p>Effective recent actions to reduce the number of persistent absentees and permanent exclusions.</p> <p>Good and productive collaborative partnership working leading to good provision for 14 to 16 year olds.</p> <p>Good arrangements to support young people in moving from school to post-16 provision.</p> <p>Good provision for some vulnerable groups such as teenage parents and those who do not attend mainstream school.</p> <p>Good progress towards the introduction of diplomas.</p>	<p>Insufficient provision for young people who have offended.</p> <p>No pre-E2E provision.</p>
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68. Overall, the levels of attainment reached by young people in Darlington are similar to national averages. Effective actions by the council have significantly improved outcomes for young people at Key Stage 4, particularly within the last year. Good arrangements to challenge and support schools have resulted in a narrowing of the difference between the best and the worst performing schools and there is an overall improvement in most performance measures. For instance, the number of young people who achieved no GCSE passes has been reduced over the last three years from 4% to 2.7% in 2007 and the number of young people gaining five GCSEs at grades A\*–C improved from 56% to 61% in 2007, close to the national average and to that of similar authorities.

69. Young people are now making better progress in schools compared with their prior attainment. In particular, compared with their prior attainment, young people who are looked after make better progress than their peers who are not, although the numbers are very small. Those young people from a minority ethnic background perform at about the same level as the population as a whole. The number of young people who gain a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 is also close to the regional and national averages. Young people taking A-level or equivalent qualifications perform better on average than young people either nationally or within the region.

70. The number of young people involved in work-based learning in Darlington has increased at the same rate as nationally in recent years. An appropriate number of work-based learning opportunities are available for young people. Success rates show an improving trend overall and are now at the national average.

71. The local authority has been effective in reducing the number of persistent absentees and the number of school exclusions. Processes to improve attendance are good, clear and well structured. Schools are given intensive support, including help to produce an overall action plan for the school, assistance with developing individual action plans for young people and regular meetings with education welfare officers about attendance generally. As a result, of the seven secondary schools in the borough, six have shown improvements in attendance. Consequently, there is an improving trend in secondary school attendance overall which has increased by around 2% since 2005 bringing it in line with that found nationally and in similar authorities. The authority has set itself a challenging target to reduce the number of persistent absentees to 5% by 2011 and is on target to achieve this. However, despite all of these effective actions, a small number of young people continue to miss school. Processes to reduce the number of exclusions have been effective in recent months. Between September 2007 and March 2008, eight young people were permanently excluded, compared with 14 in the equivalent period in the previous year.

72. Partnership working between the schools and the two colleges is good and productive, leading to a number of initiatives which benefit children and young people in the authority. A good example is Darlington College's full-time provision for 14 to 16 year olds, Skills+, which caters for a high proportion of young people who are disaffected and have a history of poor attendance at school. The programme is well respected by headteachers and has very good retention and achievement rates. Young people say how much they enjoy the programme. The Queen Elizabeth College works well with gifted and talented young people from other schools, providing an AS-level in critical thinking for them. Both colleges offer training to school staff to ensure the longer term survival and sustainability of these programmes. Similarly, the staff at Darlington College have received training from the schools on issues such as how to deal with more challenging young people and how to integrate young people with learning difficulties into mainstream courses. Schools are prepared to let their students travel between schools for specific GCSEs although, at present, the amount of movement is relatively small. All young people have access to vocational provision.

73. Darlington's approach to the development of 14–19 provision has been an effective catalyst for many of these arrangements. The 14–19 Trust has been in existence for some years and is well managed, with effective sub-groups. It has a wide membership, including representatives from the Tees Valley LSC, work-based learning providers, and links with employers, colleges and schools. The authority and its partners recognise that the development of its formal 14–19 strategy has been slow and that this has not been a key document in guiding developments until very recently. The final strategy, however, builds on the solid experience gained with existing collaborative provision and the good relationships established.

74. The council and its partners have made very good progress in preparation for the delivery of the four diplomas, approved to run from September 2009. One of the 14–19 sub-groups is responsible for this area. It has developed a range of protocols to ensure that there is a consistent approach taken by all those involved in delivering the provision. It has also started to develop a well-conceived common quality assurance system to operate across all the diploma provision and providers. It includes the use of learner feedback and a system of observation of teaching and learning. These processes will be used across all the 14–19 collaborative provision.

75. Arrangements to make the move from school to college or work-based learning easier for young people are excellent. The authority funds 18 transition mentors to work with young people who express concerns about their move to the new environment. There is some evidence of improved retention as a result.

76. There has been a steady decline in the number of young people who are not involved in education, employment or training, from 6.2% in 2005 to 4% in 2007, below the national average. However, there is a significant jump in this figure between the ages of 17 and 18 and, whilst the council has a strategy for reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training, this does not explicitly identify actions to tackle the increase between 17 and 18 years of age. At 32.4%, the proportion of children and young people who have offended and are involved in either education, employment or training is close to the national average but is significantly below the Youth Justice Board target of 85%.

77. There is much very good provision for a number of vulnerable groups, such as the programme for teenage parents. It is well planned and is well thought of by the young people who take part in it, with high retention rates as a result. The E2E provision, targeting young people who have offended, is very good, although there are insufficient training opportunities for this group of learners generally. The council recognises that there is currently a need for full-time programmes to meet the needs of those young people who need extra help before starting an E2E programme. Appropriate funding has been secured for a programme to start in September 2008.

78. The work that Connexions does with vulnerable groups is particularly good, with a team of specialist personal advisers. All stakeholders speak positively about this service. However, the organisation recognises that their service to other young people requires some improvement and, after consultation with the schools, has well-advanced plans to introduce a new approach.

79. The volume of youth service provision has tripled since 2005. The proportion of young people reached by projects has increased to 33%, above the national target of 25%. The youth service offers a range of short accredited courses for young people across the borough, some of which are intended

specifically for the more challenging young people. The number of young people achieving accredited outcomes is in line with the national targets. Many of these programmes were developed with the help of young people.

80. Children who do not attend mainstream school receive effective education, much of which has a strong focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. The programmes have clear routes into education, employment or training with some opportunities to engage young people in community work. A high proportion of those choosing to educate their children at home are Traveller families. This is well monitored by local authority staff that check patterns of travelling to ensure the availability of distance learning materials. A laptop loan scheme is also available. Where a school in another authority contacts Darlington about a Traveller who has arrived, relevant information is transferred.

81. Housing generally across the borough is of a good standard. Care leavers are provided with decent housing. Bed and breakfast accommodation is not used. However, there is at present insufficient access to supported housing for this group of young people, although the council has recently contracted with Barnardos to provide this. Teenage parents have access to good quality supported housing.

82. The authority's economic development team is mindful of the need to ensure that regeneration schemes contribute toward the economic well-being of children and young people. For example, it involved the local LSC in the early stages of planning new development in the town and is working closely with the LSC to ensure that appropriate training is in place to meet the skills needs demanded by this development. The authority ensures that all publicly funded building projects offer training opportunities for young people.

## Service management



## Capacity to improve



83. **The management of services for children and young people is good. Capacity to improve further is good.**



Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Shared understanding of key priorities.</p> <p>Good allocation of resources to priorities.</p> <p>Excellent leadership by senior officers.</p> <p>Effective financial management.</p> <p>Well-established performance management, which has improved outcomes.</p>	<p>Joint workforce planning is relatively underdeveloped.</p> <p>Limited progress on joint commissioning and integrating services at an operational level.</p>

84. The ambition of partners to improve outcomes for children and young people is good. The CYPP sets out a clear vision for children and young people in Darlington. It is based on a detailed analysis of need, updated during the review in 2007, and is understood well by partners and staff. Children and young people were consulted effectively. The 'You said, we did' sections of the CYPP are explicit about the difference their contribution made. The council as a whole has made big strides in improving its engagement with communities. This is reflected in attempts to engage with children and young people on a regular basis, rather than in one-off consultation exercises. Nevertheless, vulnerable children and young people, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are looked after, make only a very limited contribution to shaping services.

85. Partners are fully signed up to delivering the joint programme of change for children and young people. Relationships are good. The new management team in children's services and their lead member provide strong leadership to both the council department and the wider Children's Trust. This has been critical in rebuilding good relationships with schools after a period of comparative disengagement and loss of confidence in the approach of the local authority. Schools are now involved in, and committed to, the partnership's agenda. An innovative local area agreement (LAA), with its specific concentration on children and young people, shows the importance for partners of improving outcomes for this group. The LAA has secured additional funding and achieved improvements in key priorities. The new Sustainable Communities Strategy places a continuing emphasis on the children and young people's theme through the 'Aspiring Darlington' strand and its preparation has served to galvanise partners around the children's agenda. Local community and regeneration schemes take full account of the needs of young people and are targeted well on the most vulnerable groups.

86. Prioritisation is good. The prioritisation process has successfully addressed both local and national priorities. The top priorities for Darlington emerge clearly from the analysis of need. The original CYPP had seven top priorities and

two additional ones were added as a result of the review in 2007. The data and intelligence, which inform the setting of priorities, are comprehensive and increasingly sophisticated. The use of locality profiles is beginning to make an impact, for instance in the targeting of action to tackle poor school attendance. School condition documents usefully bring together key information about each school, in order to identify where support and challenge is needed.

87. The council's service planning is good and posters helpfully summarise service objectives in an easily accessible manner. Staff are clear about the key priorities for Darlington and what needs to be done by partners working together to tackle stubborn areas of comparatively low performance, such as school attendance, exclusions and attainment at Key Stage 3. Action planning is generally sound, identifying lead responsibilities, timescales, resources and target outcomes. The commitment to tackling equality and diversity issues is unambiguous and partners provide good support to Traveller families. However, planning for the transition to adult services of some young people with complex needs is inadequate.

88. The council's medium-term financial strategy is set firmly within the overall corporate plan. It provides a good framework for ensuring that resources are systematically directed to priorities. Corporate efficiency savings have been achieved and resources for children's services shifted to where they are most needed. For example, the Schools Forum agreed an extra £500,000 to tackle primary and secondary exclusions and poor behaviour and this has resulted in improved outcomes for children and young people in these areas.

89. The capacity of partners to deliver their challenging programme for change is good. Partnership working is strong at a strategic level. It is formalised in the Children's Trust and supported by joint appointments with the PCT, including a Director of Public Health and Joint Commissioning Manager. The Children's Trust is well established as part of the delivery of the overarching Darlington Partnership and has sound governance arrangements. The voluntary and community sector is fully engaged in developing partnership working, although their full involvement at a strategic level is relatively recent. Partnership working with the police is outstanding. For example, police officers and social workers are quick to respond and act together to safeguard children. New ways of working in localities are being set up, but so far, although partners work well together, genuinely integrated working at an operational level is limited.

90. Financial management is competent. Spending within children's services has been within budget in each of the last three years and difficult demand-led budgets, for example relating to pupil placements, are kept under control. An increasing number of budgets are pooled, or at least aligned. Risk management has a high profile in the council's planning process and is based on robust analysis. Value for money is good. Services generally deliver satisfactory or good outcomes at average or below average cost. Officers and councillors focus

well on securing value for money and regularly analyse the relationship between costs and outcomes.

91. Joint workforce planning is relatively underdeveloped, although a joint strategy has been agreed recently. This is the culmination of lengthy and detailed working together, including the completion of an audit of skills. Likewise, there has been limited progress so far on joint commissioning. An understanding is developing among managers across the different services as to what this means for them, and the Children's Trust has recently approved a concise joint commissioning strategy. The partners' record on recruiting and retaining key staff, including social workers, is good, although there has been a high turnover of some healthcare staff. The council has successfully implemented the move to single status for all its staff.

92. The council has been very successful in improving the quality of education buildings. For example, as a result of securing funding from various sources, the council will have managed either to rebuild or to substantially refurbish four of the seven secondary schools, ahead of the national 'Building Schools for the Future' initiative. For primary schools, it has secured pathfinder status for the implementation of the Government's Primary Capital Programme.

93. Performance management is good. Both the council and the Children's Trust use a well tried and effective performance reporting system, which clearly identifies performance against key objectives. Performance is systematically reported to members and officers, highlighting those areas where progress has been either particularly good or particularly bad. Reports to the Cabinet and to departmental teams explicitly link financial and performance information. Service managers know how their service compares with other authorities. Performance management of individuals through personal development reviews is routine and well embedded.

94. The council has used performance management to concentrate efforts and resources on key areas for improvement and this has had demonstrable results. For example, a focus on improving attendance has led to increased staff in the education welfare service, the better use of data and a sustained improvement in outcomes. Previously judged inadequate by external inspectors, the youth service is now rectifying weaknesses in provision, following additional investment and the implementation of an improvement plan.

95. The Scrutiny Committee for children and young people has played a regular and productive role in performance management. It can point to many examples of areas where its work has made a difference. Its review of health and safety in schools resulted in more practical and cost effective approaches to health and safety. A thorough review of primary schools resulted in changes to provision.

96. The capacity of partners to improve further is good. In the last year or so, the pace of improvement has accelerated. Partners' actions are now making a lasting impact on aspects of performance, which were a concern for too long.

The Children's Trust is confident and staff are enthusiastic about developing new ways of working. The Director of Children's Services and his team provide excellent leadership. Moreover, important foundations for continued improvement are secure. These include sound strategic planning, good financial and performance management, regular information sharing and a close attention to improving value for money.

## Annex A

### **MOST RECENTLY PUBLISHED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

#### **Summary**

Darlington Borough Council delivers services for children and young people at a good level. It knows its strengths and weaknesses well and plans appropriate action to tackle any shortcomings it has identified. Its contribution to improving outcomes is outstanding in two of the five areas, and good in another two. However, its contribution in relation to the enjoyment and achievement of young people remains only adequate. The recent appointments of a new Director of Children's Services and of other senior managers together with a radical restructuring of the department have led to some encouraging signs of improvement, but it is too early to judge the impact of these changes.

The full annual performance assessment can be found at:

[http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=3121&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa\\_2007\\_841.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=3121&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa_2007_841.pdf)

## Annex B

### CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Outcomes for children and young people in Darlington are good. Work to improve the health of children and young people is good, with significant improvements achieved in the rate of teenage pregnancies. Arrangements for safeguarding are good and the Local Safeguarding Children Board provides strong leadership. Standards of educational attainment are improving on most measures and the difference between the best and worst performing schools is reducing.

2. Service management in Darlington is good. The partners' ambition to improve outcomes for children and young people is good and clear priorities have been set for achieving this vision. Partnership working is strong at a strategic level and work with the police is outstanding. The Children's Trust is well established and the voluntary and community sector is engaged, although their full involvement at a strategic level is relatively recent. New ways of working in localities are being established but, although partners work well together, at an operational level genuinely integrated working is limited as yet. After a period of comparative disengagement and loss of confidence in the approach of the local authority, schools are now involved in and committed to the partnership's agenda. Local community and regeneration schemes take full account of the needs of young people and are targeted well on the most vulnerable groups.

3. The combined work of all local services to secure the health of children and young people is good. The rate of teenage pregnancies, although higher than found nationally, has reduced by 24.6% from the 2005 baseline. The engagement of schools in the National Healthy Schools programme has been slow until very recently but all schools are now participating. The Traveller community has very good access to early years health and parenting support. Action to promote young people's mental health is good and improving. There are some delays in assessment and long waiting times for some specialist health services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Health outcomes for looked after children and care leavers are good.

4. Children and young people appear safe and arrangements to ensure this are good. In most cases outcomes for children on the child protection register are better than in similar authorities. Thresholds for accessing services are clear and implemented effectively. Actions taken to reduce anti-social behaviour are good overall. Darlington youth offending service has achieved an impressive reduction in the number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system and an excellent reduction in the number of young people who re-offend and receive a custodial sentence. The rate of offending committed by young people waiting to appear at court, however, currently shows a significant deterioration.

There are effective arrangements for tracking children missing from care and education.

5. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and to achieve well is good overall. Early years provision is good in more settings than in similar authorities. Arrangements to support and challenge schools are good. Progress has been rapid in areas of stubbornly low performance, such as school attendance, exclusion and attainment at Key Stage 3. The educational outcomes for individual children and young people in care are good. The progress children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make in primary schools is in line with similar authorities and better than similar authorities in secondary schools.

6. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. The council as a whole has made big strides in improving its engagement with children and young people. They contributed well to the CYPP review in 2007, and are now engaged on a more regular and on-going basis. Nevertheless, there are too few opportunities for vulnerable children and young people, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are looked after, to contribute to shaping services at a strategic level. Opportunities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make a meaningful contribution to their reviews are limited.

7. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good. Strong partnership working has resulted in good initiatives, such as Skills+ for disaffected young people and the development of joint provision for gifted and talented young people. Good progress is being made towards the introduction of the new diplomas. Arrangements to help most young people make the move from school and post-16 provision are excellent. There has been a steady decline in the number of young people who are not engaged in employment, education or training, although there is a significant jump in this figure between the ages of 17 and 18. Success rates for work-based learning are improving. Care leavers are provided with housing which is generally of a good standard. Teenage parents have access to good quality supported housing.

8. The capacity of council services to improve is good. Driven by excellent leadership and supported by good financial and strong performance management, the Children's Trust and council services have a good capacity to improve further and deliver their programme for change.

## Annex C

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

1. This joint area review was conducted using the arrangements required under Section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of inspectors from Ofsted, the Healthcare Commission and the Audit Commission. The review was undertaken according to the requirements of the *Framework for the inspection of children's services*.
2. The review was linked to the contemporaneous corporate assessment of the local council by the Audit Commission and these findings plus aspects of the most recent Annual Performance Assessment are represented in the relevant part of the corporate assessment report.
3. This review describes the outcomes achieved by children and young people growing up in Darlington and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being. Together with the Annual Performance Assessment of children's services, joint area reviews focus on the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and are well prepared to secure economic well-being. This review explores these issues by focusing on children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, children who are looked after and children at risk or requiring safeguarding and a few additional investigations. It evaluates the collective contribution made by all relevant children's services to outcomes for these children and young people.
4. The review took place in two stages consisting of an analysis stage (where recorded evidence was scrutinised) and a two-week fieldwork stage (where inspectors met children and young people, parents and carers and those who deliver services for them).