



**Better
education
and care**

Joint area review

Cumbria 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 nine 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 Cumbria 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 ten week period. The first stage reviewed all existing evidence including:
 - self-assessment undertaken by local public service providers
 - a survey of children and young people
 - performance data
 - the findings of the monitoring visit of the youth service
 - planning documents
 - information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day care provision
 - evidence gathered during the earlier Youth Offending Team inspection; and
 - briefings from staff within inspectorates, commissions and other public bodies in contact with local providers.
6. The second stage involved inspection fieldwork. This included studies of how far local services have improved outcomes for a small sample of children and young people, some of whom have the most complex needs, and a study of provision in one neighbourhood in Workington. 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. Cumbria is the second largest county in England. It is located between the Irish Sea and the Pennine hills and the majority of the county is designated as a national park. Its central area of fells and mountains is sparsely populated, with the majority of settlements being found on the fringes. Most settlements are small and the largest, Carlisle, has a population of 103,000. The number of young people aged under 19 is declining; for example, the secondary school population is expected to drop by 19.5% by 2017. The population is predominantly white and the proportion of residents from Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups is very small, although increasing.

8. Cumbria has a wide range of socio-economic circumstances and 17% of the population live in areas that are in the 10% most deprived in the country. It is an area of slow economic growth, with poor transport links across the county, although the east is well served by the M6 motorway. There are areas of affluence in some rural areas and in some small towns such as Kendal and Bowness. However, a proportion of the rural population suffers from isolation and poverty. The settlements on the coast, including Barrow, Whitehaven and Workington have a legacy of heavy industry which has suffered from decline and contain areas of significant socio-economic deprivation, as does Carlisle. While the unemployment rate is low overall, there are pockets of high unemployment in the larger settlements and average wages are below the national level. There is a heavy reliance on seasonal employment in tourism and in a few large industries which are potentially vulnerable to decline.

9. The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) includes the county, city, district and borough councils, the Cumbria and Lancashire Strategic Health Authority, four primary care trusts (PCTs), two NHS acute trusts, Cumbria Constabulary, the Cumbria Probation Service, the Cumbria Youth Offending Service, Connexions Cumbria, the Cumbria Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Cumbria's schools and a range of voluntary and community agencies. It is led by a strategic board on which the major bodies are represented.

10. Cumbria LSC works very closely with the local authority, Connexions, colleges, training providers and schools in addressing the 14–19 strategy. Post-16 education and training is provided by four general further education colleges, 26 sixth forms, one sixth form college, 18 work-based training providers, and by one higher education institution which also provides work-based learning. Cumbria LSC has contracts with five of the work-based learning

providers to deliver Entry to Employment provision, providing 869 places across the county. Adult and community learning, including family learning, is provided by Cumbria County Council.

11. Primary care for children in Cumbria is provided by the Carlisle and District, West Cumbria, and Eden Valley PCTs in the north (with joint management arrangements) and by Morecambe Bay PCT in the south. From October 2006, the PCTs are to be merged into one PCT for Cumbria. North Cumbria Acute Hospitals NHS Trust is the main provider of acute services for children in north Cumbria, and University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Trust is the main provider of acute services for children in south Cumbria. Children's mental health services are provided by North Cumbria Mental Health and Learning Disabilities NHS Trust in the north. Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland Mental Health Trust also provides children's mental health services for children from north Cumbria. Children's mental health services in south Cumbria are provided by Morecambe Bay PCT. Later in 2006, children's mental health services in Cumbria are to be provided by a new mental health and learning disabilities NHS trust. The North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust serves the whole of Cumbria, and several other areas. The North West Strategic Health Authority is responsible for the trusts providing health services for the children of Cumbria (with the exception of Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland Mental Health Trust), as well as for several other areas.

12. The council provides its services to children and young people through a Children's Services Authority (CSA). There are some multi-agency service groupings, such as the Drug and Alcohol Action Team and the Youth Offending Team. The council, at the time of the review, was responsible for the care of 480 looked after children and young people. It maintains 345 schools, including six nursery schools, 289 primary schools, 42 secondary schools, five special schools and three pupil referral units. There are 26 high schools with a sixth form and one grammar school. There are no young offender institutions in the area.

Summary Report

Outcomes for children and young people

13. **Outcomes for children and young people in Cumbria are adequate.** Children and young people appear safe. In general, young people are healthy, and the health indicators are in line with the national figures, however, smoking and alcohol misuse remain problems. Most young people in Cumbria feel safe, although some young people live in communities where they are concerned about their own safety. Educational standards are better overall than are found nationally and the majority of Cumbrian schools are good or better. Many young people are contributing to the development of their schools and communities. An increasing proportion of young people, including children looked after by the authority, are involved in the development of council and other services. Young people are well prepared for achieving economic well-

being: the proportion in education, training and employment is high, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and attainment in post-16 provision is satisfactory, with good outcomes in work-based learning. However, too many young people enter employment without training and too few young people progress into higher education. The overall outcomes for children looked after by the council and for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are adequate. However, the attendance at school of a minority of looked after children is too low. Some young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have difficulty in accessing suitable housing in some areas.

The impact of local services

14. The impact of local services in improving outcomes for children and young people is adequate. Services are contributing well to sustained improvement in the outcomes for the majority of young people, including those in the most vulnerable groups. However, while the contributions of services to promote educational achievement and economic well-being are good, those of services to promote health, social care and participation are only adequate. This reflects the fact that some of the initiatives in these services are at an early stage of implementation and are yet to impact fully on outcomes throughout the county. In this context, service management is adequate. However, the capacity for further improvement is good. There is a track record of securing improvement. The service for social care has improved significantly from a previously inadequate service to one that is now providing adequate care and protection for children at risk. There have been improvements in the fostering and adoption services and robust plans are in place to sustain this progress. Overall, reasonable progress has been made in dealing with inadequacies in the youth service; in a number of areas, progress has been good.

15. There is a strong commitment to improvement on the part of senior officers, elected members and partners. Leadership provided by the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director is good and this is supported by increased management capacity within the CSA. The management of change has been measured and has support has been gained for its vision from staff and partners. The commitment of the partnership to joint working is strong. The council and its partners know their strengths and areas for development well, as shown by the honest and accurate self-assessment for the review. There are clear plans for the development of the service and the CYPSP; work is progressing rapidly and resources are being directed at the correct priorities. Performance management is adequate, but solid foundations have been laid to increase its effectiveness in monitoring the work of the partnership.

Being healthy

16. The impact of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is adequate. There are some good features. Parents receive good support to keep their children healthy. Health promotion is well developed in most schools, and is beginning to make an impact, although levels

of smoking and alcohol misuse among young people remain of concern. Young people have been consulted on the health services they want, and their recommendations have led to improvement, for example in the funding of school nurses. Innovative multi-agency initiatives are in place to address sexual health issues. Teenage pregnancy rates are below the national rate and there is targeted support in areas where levels of teenage conceptions are of particular concern. General practitioner and dental services are good, immunisation rates are high across the county, but access to therapies is inconsistent. Accident and emergency (A&E) departments are satisfactory, although there are too few trained children's nurses. Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) are adequate, though access to out of hours urgent support and in-patient beds is insufficient. The proportion of looked after children receiving health assessments is good and increasing. Specialist community teams are in place to address the needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and transition to adult services is improving. However, therapy support is not always available and residential respite care services are underdeveloped.

Staying safe

17. The impact of all agencies in keeping children safe is adequate.

The most vulnerable children are protected effectively. Arrangements to identify, refer and assess child concerns are improving. However, thresholds for accessing children's services are new and yet to deliver a shared understanding within and between agencies. The quality of assessments and care management is adequate and improving. Timescales for the completion of assessments are improving but remain too slow. Joint working is effective but too much is dependent on local networks and professional relationships. Management arrangements to resolve delays in the provision of specialist services are underdeveloped. Monitoring of outcomes for children from BME communities is not always effective.

18. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is established and provides strong leadership in ensuring that agencies understand their roles and contributions to the safeguarding agenda. Links with community and road safety partnerships have raised the profile of children's safety. Information sharing is effective at strategic and operational levels. Multi-agency strategies are contributing to creating safer environments for children. Arrangements to combat domestic violence have increased reporting rates and improved support to victims. However, arrangements to combat bullying are less well coordinated. Agencies are aware of the concerns of children and young people and provide a wide range of good information and guidance to help them to keep safe.

19. A wide range of preventative services is yet to be effectively coordinated and access extended across the county. There is an increasing emphasis on prevention and earlier intervention and a well thought out family support strategy is emerging. Services for looked after children are adequate overall.

The council has responded robustly to findings of recent inspections of fostering and adoption services that judged them to be poor. Capacity and management arrangements have been strengthened. Placement stability is satisfactory but provision is insufficient to meet the diversity of needs, particularly for children from BME communities. Services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have improved and are adequate. However, some aspects of joint working are underdeveloped. Specialist input is not always timely in the assessment of risks and in planning for the accommodation needs of young people approaching adulthood.

Enjoying and achieving

20. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good. The council ensures that educational provision is of high quality and standards are generally good. Most children and young people report that they feel safe and happy in and around school. The school improvement team effectively monitors and challenges school performance. Support through national programmes is good, particularly on meeting the needs of different groups of pupils, for example, gifted and talented and BME children. The council has had success with such programmes, for example, in raising the standard of boys' writing at Key Stage 2.

21. Attendance is good and, by working with schools, the education welfare service provides very effective support. Action to promote good behaviour is satisfactory and is suitably embedded in efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Permanent exclusions are lower than national averages but, despite recent success in reducing figures, the numbers of fixed-term exclusions from secondary schools remain high. A good range of recreational activities is available for children and young people. However, the good provision alone is not giving enough encouragement for more of the most vulnerable children and young people to participate in recreational activities.

22. Educational provision for those who do not attend school is good. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported as they move from the early years through school and most make good progress. Children and young people who are looked after are generally well supported in school and a higher proportion than nationally gain a qualification. However, too many do not attend school full-time and the number not entered for examinations is slightly above the national average.

Making a positive contribution

23. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is adequate. The council and its partners are strongly committed to improving opportunities for participation. There are robust strategies for increasing the involvement of young people, with effective examples of multi-agency working. However, these are not yet consistently reaching all groups and areas.

24. There is a wide range of effective programmes in schools and in the community to help children and young people to develop socially and emotionally and to forge secure relationships with adults and their peers. Children and young people are generally well supported through transitions. However, the support for young carers is inconsistent.

25. The range of opportunities to become involved in the development of schools and of council services is valued by young people. Large numbers of schools have effective school councils. Young people were involved in developing the vision for services within the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). However, the numbers involved were too limited. There are increasing opportunities for young people to inform the planning of services, for example, the youth service, but these opportunities are not yet consistently available across all services and the county. Consequently, some young people feel they are not able to contribute sufficiently to their communities. There is no consistent system in place for evaluating the impact of consultation.

26. The improvement in the provision of youth work is beginning to lead to better engagement through purposeful activity, but this is at an early stage. Multi-agency interventions, such as Youth Inclusion programmes and Prevent and Deter, are beginning to have an impact on reducing rates of offending and re-offending in some areas, but this provision is not consistent across the county. However, the models of successful intervention are being extended by the Crime Reduction Strategic Partnership. Strategies to retain young offenders in education, employment or training are successful.

27. A strategy to consult with, and involve, looked after children, Action4, offers a good opportunity for them to express their views, and as a result many have gained new skills and confidence. However, levels of participation in statutory reviews are inadequate despite recent actions to address this issue. Programmes to promote social inclusion for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are increasing, but not all schemes are integrated into mainstream provision when appropriate.

Achieving economic well-being

28. **The impact of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good.** The way in which young people are helped to prepare for working life is good. Connexions has made good progress in identifying and targeting young people who are not in education, training or employment, particularly in those areas where the problem is greatest. While these figures remain low, there is variation between areas of the county,

29. The coordination and planning of 14–19 provision is very good. There is strong strategic planning, leadership and monitoring by the council, and very good collaboration and partnership working at area level. Schools and work-based learning providers work together well to ensure that learners have positive experience of vocational education. GCSE and A-level results, and

further education success rates are satisfactory overall, and outcomes for young people in work-based learning are good. Too few young people in Cumbria progress into higher education.

30. Support for young people aged 16–19 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, and a high proportion remains in education after age 16. Care leavers are adequately supported to prepare for independence. Effective monitoring and support strategies are in place, but some care leavers face difficulties in gaining employment.

31. Action to support families in maximising their economic well-being is good overall, with adequate and increasing childcare provision and good information about financial and other support. Action is taken to ensure that most young people have decent housing. However, there is insufficient emergency housing, and some young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities experience difficulties in accessing suitable housing in some areas.

Service management

32. **The management of services for children and young people is adequate.** The ambition of the council and its partners to improve outcomes for children and young people is good. There is a clear vision for the delivery of services shared by most staff and partners. However, the implications of the preventative strategy are not fully understood by all front line staff and some staff in health do not feel that they have been fully involved in the planning process. The senior management team has a clear strategy for the delivery of services in localities across the county, but the detailed planning to extend the current pilots is underdeveloped. Prioritisation is adequate as appropriate priorities have been established within the CYPP and the service development plan. The CYPP does not consistently provide precise targets against which to measure the effectiveness of the partnership. Moreover, it has been developed with only limited involvement of young people and without a sufficiently detailed assessment of need. The involvement of young people in the development of policy is improving.

33. Overall, performance management is adequate. There is a clear structure within the CSA for monitoring, reporting and challenging service performance. This has been well supported by investment in information and communication technology and the introduction of a new performance management system, which encompasses both financial and service performance through a balanced scorecard approach. The extent to which performance management is embedded varies between services and the monitoring by the Children and Young People's Partnership Board is underdeveloped. Nevertheless, there are a number of examples where performance management is strong, for example, the monitoring of progress against the recommendations of the Victoria Climbié inquiry.

34. The council is achieving adequate value for money; overall it is a high spending authority compared to similar councils and has outcomes that are good in education and satisfactory in social services. The council has a track record of financially supporting children and young people's services, and resources have been directed appropriately towards priorities, particularly in underperforming areas.

35. The capacity to improve further is good. There is a track record of political and senior management support; management capacity within the CSA is good and partnership working is strong. The self-assessment was accurate and reflected a thorough understanding of the current position and the actions needed to achieve the council's challenging ambitions. There is a strong culture of continuous improvement.

Grades

Grades awarded:

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

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

Recommendations

For immediate action

The council and its partners should:

- increase the participation of vulnerable children and young people, and in particular looked after children, in reviews that plan for their future.

For action over the next six months

The council and its partners should:

- ensure that procedures are implemented to monitor the impact of the Children and Young People's Partnership
- increase the involvement of children and young people in the future planning for the development of children's services
- improve the responsiveness of services to the needs of children and young people from BME communities
- improve the range of residential respite care services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- extend support for young carers
- enable more children and young people, particularly the most vulnerable, to take part in leisure and recreational provision by working more closely with parents and carers to remove barriers to participation.

Main Report

Outcomes for children and young people

36. Outcomes for children and young people in Cumbria are adequate.

37. Children and young people are generally healthy. Almost all young people consider themselves quite healthy, or very healthy, as is the case nationally. Most health indicators support this view, but there are variations across the county. The proportion of expectant mothers smoking during pregnancy is higher than the national average. In all parts of Cumbria, the proportion of low birth weight babies and the levels of infant and perinatal mortality are generally in line with, or less than, those in similar areas and the national averages. The proportion of mothers initiating breast-feeding is lower than the national average in the north of the county but in line with the national average in some areas in the south. Overall, teenage pregnancy rates are lower than the national average and reflect the national downward trend, although levels are rising in some deprived areas. Sexually transmitted infections in 16–19 year olds are increasing in line with the national trend. There are high rates of immunisations of children at ages two and five. The numbers of children with decayed, missing and filled teeth at ages five and 14

are broadly in line with the national averages. The admission of young people to hospital due to substance misuse is generally in line with those in similar areas and in the rest of England. The health care of looked after children is improving as a result of dedicated health support.

38. Children and young people appear safe. Most children and young people can access good support, guidance and information on staying safe and they feel safe in school and in their home area. However, some are concerned about road safety, bullying and perceive groups of young people as threatening, particularly at night time. The numbers of children and young people who are killed or seriously injured on roads are low overall but vary significantly from year to year. Children and young people have inconsistent access to early intervention by support services depending on where they live. Some children from BME communities have difficulty in accessing services that are sensitive to their cultural needs. Children at risk of significant harm are effectively protected. The number on the child protection register is reducing and is significantly below the national average. All children on the child protection register and almost all looked after children have access to a qualified social worker. However, some looked after young people feel that they have insufficient direct contact with their social worker. The number of looked after children is declining. Most looked after children and young people have stable placements, feel safe and receive satisfactory care. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have access to an increasing range of services and most are supported effectively when moving between placements.

39. Children and young people achieve well. Children and young people achieve well, enjoy their education and feel safe and happy in and around school. Educational standards are generally above the national average, with the exception of the proportion of children attaining one or more GCSEs at grades A* to G, which is just below the national average. Boys are performing less well than girls, particularly in Key Stage 3. In the early key stages performance is generally good, although the achievement is more variable as children move through the secondary schools. Children looked after by the council attain better than similar children nationally and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities generally make good progress. Attendance is good overall. While primary school attendance is better than in secondary schools, both sets of figures exceed those nationally and in similar authorities. However, too many looked after children miss too many school days.

40. Permanent exclusions are lower than the national average, but the number of children and young people who are excluded for a fixed period of time from secondary schools is high. However, fixed-term exclusions declined by 12% over the last year. The percentage of surplus places in primary schools is lower than national figures, but in the secondary phase there are more surplus places than in similar authorities and nationally. The majority of schools are good or better. However, there are three secondary schools requiring special measures, each with new executive headteachers in post.

41. Children and young people have an adequate range of opportunities to make decisions and to take personal responsibility, and many make a positive contribution to their communities.

42. Children and young people are developing well and are increasingly prepared to take responsibility. A range of peer mentoring opportunities are available to allow young people to develop interpersonal skills and to support each other. Children and young people benefit from their involvement in school councils in the large majority of schools. They are increasingly engaging and enjoying opportunities for participation in a range of situations and are helping to shape some services. Their views are being listened to and they are growing in confidence and learning new skills leading to raised self-esteem. However, young people are not consistently able to contribute to decision making and service development across the county. Anti-social behaviour is a problem in some communities and youth offending rates have not reduced in line with national targets. However, there are examples of some young people responding positively to programmes of intervention leading to reduced levels of offending and re-offending in some of the most deprived areas, and this work is being extended. The proportion of young offenders in education, employment or training is above the national rate. The planning for youth work in Cumbria is improving and young people's engagement with these services is beginning to improve.

43. Looked after children use a consultative group, Action4, to make their views known effectively. The involvement of young people with elected members is resulting in improved outcomes. There are opportunities for some looked after children to chair their own reviews, but the number of looked after children involved in their reviews is inadequate. Social inclusion for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate and improving. Most of these young people are supported well at points of transition. However, the support for young carers is inconsistent.

44. Children and young people are able to achieve economic well-being and are prepared well for working life. The number of young people who are not engaged in education, employment or training is low; however, although there are variations across the county, too many enter work without training. There are very few whose situation remains unknown. Young people have good opportunities to experience vocational education while at school. Outcomes for young people in work-based learning are good, with achievement significantly above the national average. Outcomes in terms of examination results at 16+ for school students are broadly in line with the national rates but vary between areas. Further education attainment is satisfactory overall, with overall success rates for 2004/05 at the national average, but slightly below that of the North West region. There is low progression into higher education by young people in Cumbria. The proportion of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who remain in education beyond age 16 is high. The success rate of the small numbers who participate in work-based learning is much lower than nationally. Most care

leavers are well supported with a pathway plan and the majority are allocated to a personal adviser. The proportion of care leavers with a GCSE qualification is good and the proportion gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C is slightly above that found nationally. Most young people live in suitable accommodation, but there is insufficient emergency housing, and some young people have unsuitable housing.

The impact of local services

Being healthy

45. The work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is adequate.

46. There are some good features and partnership working has improved in the last year. Parents and carers receive good support to keep their children healthy. Maternity services are satisfactory, although currently under review, but initiatives to reduce smoking in pregnancy and encourage breast-feeding are not yet demonstrating improved outcomes, with some variation in rates across the county. There is good support in some Sure Start areas for women at risk of suffering from postnatal depression. There is a variety of effective parenting programmes that focus on children's behaviour and developing parents' life skills. Parents of children with disabilities have specific support in north Cumbria, and a voice in the planning of services. Teenage parents receive good support through Connexions, and there is targeted health support for vulnerable groups such as traveller families and those with learning difficulties.

47. The promotion of healthy lifestyles for children and young people is good, but services have yet to demonstrate impact generally. Almost all schools are actively engaged in the national Healthy Schools programme, with over half expected to achieve an award by the end of 2006. School nurses are heavily involved in implementing the programme, but not all areas of the county are adequately resourced. The council's survey of young people's views of their health has led to the recommendations being taken up by local health services, and used as a lever to obtain further funding for school nurses. Whilst the organisers of the Healthy Schools programme are attempting to track outcomes, this work is at an early stage and, as yet, it is not possible to demonstrate consistent improvement.

48. There are good initiatives to promote healthy eating, such as in south Cumbria where the PCT, early years team and Sure Start work together in local communities, but there is no formally agreed strategy for tackling obesity. There are a number of initiatives, including work by Connexions, to support young people in managing stress and promoting resilience, including specific programmes for young offenders and looked after children. Initiatives to combat the high rates of smoking and alcohol misuse amongst young people are not as yet having a consistent impact. Agencies are working together to improve sexual health services, with innovative approaches to sex and relationship education, for example, birthday card packs have been devised by

looked after children and a male young men's sexual health worker has been appointed. There are carefully targeted initiatives in areas of Cumbria where teenage conception is a cause for particular concern.

49. The action taken to promote children and young people's physical health is adequate. Access to GP services in north Cumbria is good. Access to dental health services has improved as a result of recent initiatives to recruit dentists from overseas. A&E provision is satisfactory; however, not all A&E departments have specialised children's areas, and there are very limited numbers of trained nurses available throughout the county. Waiting times for some therapies are inadequate, and provision can be inconsistent across the county.

50. Services to promote children and young people's mental health are adequate, but the promotion of mental health remains a priority for all partners. CAMHS provides a wide range of advice, consultation and treatments. All agencies are working to a clear action plan towards developing a comprehensive CAMHS by the end of the year, and a CAMHS strategy is in draft. The support, advice and early intervention provided by CAMHS primary care workers across the county are effective. There is now a single point of access to CAMHS in both the north and south of Cumbria. Waiting times for specialist CAMHS treatment are above average in south Cumbria, although reducing as a result of service redesign, but waiting times in north Cumbria are within target. However, some young people and their carers feel they wait too long. Positive features are the development of an early intervention in psychosis service in south Cumbria, which includes young offenders and provision for 16 and 17 year olds in a designated in-patient ward in west Cumbria. There are no 24 hour or weekend services for urgent mental health problems, but a crisis response plan is being developed. There is no provision for very specialist (tier 4) beds for all age groups in Cumbria, and there are not always beds available in other parts of England. This can lead to young people being admitted inappropriately to general paediatric wards, but this is being addressed by the Strategic Health Authority.

51. The health needs of looked after children are adequately addressed. Most have regular and timely health assessments and some young people are involved in service improvement initiatives. All looked after children now have access to a dentist. Specialist services for looked after children provide good levels of support to individual children and their carers. Staffing resources are, however, variable across the county, and only in the west are holistic health assessments undertaken by a specialist doctor and nurse. Access to CAMHS for looked after children has improved since the introduction of a county-wide clinical psychology service for looked after children. The quality of joint working to support individual children is inconsistent.

52. Health services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are adequate. Parents of disabled children have increasing access to more effective multi-agency support, including CAMHS, the palliative care team and the challenging behaviour team, but these are not always

universally available. Health initiatives have contributed to, and improved, transition to adult health services. Attempts to redesign the residential respite care service have been unsuccessful and the current service is inadequate. Health service partnership work with social services is underdeveloped in relation to arrangements for shared packages of care and there is no allocation of a key worker.

Staying safe

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

54. Good information is provided, but not often in the first language of all residents. A sound road safety strategy has ambitious targets for reducing deaths and serious injuries to children and young people. Good multi-agency initiatives, such as Barrow and South Lakeland Junior Citizenship Scheme, promote safety in rural, coastal and urban environments. However, processes to evaluate and replicate good practice across the county are not well established.

55. The impact of services in promoting a safe environment is adequate. A good emergency plan for children and young people is in place and is supported by comprehensive procedures and guidance. Partnerships to combat domestic violence and bullying have mixed impact. A comprehensive domestic violence strategy has improved reporting rates, the quality of investigations and the support for victims. Multi-agency services include many innovative practices, such as the Let Go project in Carlisle and Eden. Arrangements for combating bullying are less well coordinated. Correctly, the council has placed a high priority on the development of a multi-agency bullying strategy. It is concerning that most strategies and guidance are insufficiently proactive in addressing the needs of children and young people from BME communities.

56. Services to reduce the incidence of neglect and abuse are adequate and improving. The Common Assessment Framework is emerging and new thresholds for accessing services were introduced recently. These have yet to deliver a shared understanding and consistency in practice across, and within, agencies. Patterns of referrals and registration on the child protection register reflect a lack of clear thresholds and inconsistencies in interventions. Case file audits, consistent with the recommendations of the Victoria Climbié Inquiry, and the well managed implementation of the Integrated Children's System are improving the quality of assessments of need and care management. The timely completion of initial and core assessments has increased significantly, but remains too slow. Social workers have manageable caseloads and processes for safe and timely transfer of cases are increasingly robust. All children on the child protection register and almost all looked after children are allocated appropriately to qualified social workers. Managers have risk assessed the cases and put in place appropriate arrangements to ensure that all looked after

children have access to a named social worker when allocated to an unqualified worker.

57. Joint working on assessment and care planning for children in need is good overall, although more variable for health services. However, processes to resolve delays in specialist service provision are underdeveloped. The involvement of parents and carers in service planning is good. However, this is less so for children and young people, particularly for participation in child protection conferences. Most users of services are aware of the complaints procedure.

58. Professional development is promoted well in children's services. Staff feel supported and are appropriately supervised. A very good electronic library provides easy access to comprehensive information on policy, procedure and practice and is highly valued. Processes to ensure that staff do not pose a risk to children are adequate and those for undertaking checks are robust. However, processes for tracking progress of allegations of abuse against staff lack sufficient rigour. Multi-agency arrangements for managing offenders who pose risks to children are effective.

59. The Cumbria LSCB is strongly led, has appropriate representation from statutory and independent agencies, and is adequately resourced. Accountabilities and links with key strategic partnerships are clear. It has a broad safeguarding focus and a clear business plan. Commissioning arrangements for timely serious case reviews and ensuring lessons are fully learnt have been strengthened. Designated child protection lead officers are in place across most agencies. However, pressures in recruitment of designated doctors have led to some capacity issues in investigating sexual abuse and unexpected or sudden deaths. Whilst inter-agency safeguarding practice is adequate, too much depends on local networks and professional relationships. Multi-agency child protection procedures are being revised in line with new local and national policy and guidance.

60. Information sharing between agencies is good and underpinned with comprehensive multi-agency protocols. Processes for tracking all children and those who go missing from education and from care are robust. Numbers of children whose whereabouts are unknown and those who are out of education provision for long periods of time are reducing. Development of multi-agency shared information systems is at an early stage and consistent with most councils.

61. Services to reduce the need for children to be looked after are satisfactory and joint working between agencies is effective. The number of looked after children is reducing and is broadly consistent with similar councils. There is a wide range of good preventative services, but these are yet to be coordinated and extended to provide access to earlier intervention consistently across the county. A good multi-agency family support strategy is emerging.

62. Most looked after children are placed appropriately and supported to make good progress. Safeguarding arrangements are appropriately monitored through the corporate parenting function. Training and support for foster carers is satisfactory overall, although not all carers feel valued. Placement stability is adequate. However, there are insufficient placements to provide choice or to meet the diversity of needs, particularly for children from BME communities. Recently, expenditure on placements has been reduced significantly through improved monitoring and some safe returns of children into county placements. The council has responded robustly to findings of recent inspections of adoption and fostering services, which judged them to be poor. Satisfactory progress is being made in meeting key requirements for capacity and service management.

63. Services to safeguard children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have improved and are now adequate. Most children and families receive timely, and appropriate, support. Arrangements for assessment of risks are clear but lack early specialist input. Assessment of the needs of carers is not always prioritised. Joint working is effective for most children but some aspects are underdeveloped. Although transition planning is improving, there is no protocol with housing agencies to secure specialist input for young people approaching adulthood.

Enjoying and achieving

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

65. Parents and carers receive good support in helping their children to enjoy and achieve. They receive helpful guidance from the early stages of their child's development, for example, from Sure Start and children's centre newsletters which help to provide relevant information about training, health and preparations for their child's learning. The children's information service offers a good range of support, for example, with details about pre-school groups and nursery entitlement. The *Moving on* booklet is also very helpful for children transferring to secondary schools. It includes good, relevant, contributions by children and young people.

66. Early years provision promotes children's development well, helping them to meet early learning goals. The strong commitment to inclusion and early intervention is well illustrated by the support for children with specific learning needs before they start mainstream school. This is reflected by the high numbers of statements of special need in early years settings and the close monitoring of progress. Training is given a high priority for staff, parents and childminders. This includes a wide range of relevant children's centre programmes for parents and carers as well as training for staff, for instance on the use of data.

67. The council takes good action to ensure that educational provision is of high quality. The school improvement team effectively monitors and challenges school performance and responds quickly to underachievement. Support is well structured, easily understood by schools and sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing school contexts. The prompt and varied response to failing schools has resulted in appropriate actions, following considerations of viability, including federating schools as well as changes in leadership. Support through national programmes is good, with particular attention to meeting the needs of different groups of pupils, for example, gifted and talented and BME children. While the authority has had success with these programmes, for example, by raising the standards of boys' writing at Key Stage 2, the challenge remains to share the good impact more widely to gain greater county-wide benefit from the strategic overview of successful practice.

68. The support to enable children and young people to attend and enjoy school and to achieve highly is good. The work of the education welfare service is very effective, working closely with schools to prevent poor attendance and responding quickly to emerging issues. It liaises closely with other bodies, such as Connexions and the youth offending service. Plans are in place to address surplus school places in secondary schools, with options for the reorganisation of schools in parts of the county.

69. Action to promote good behaviour is satisfactory. Managing the behaviour of children and young people in mainstream schools is suitably embedded in the national strategy work to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Nevertheless, some schools find it hard to manage the challenging behaviour of some children and young people without extra support. While permanent exclusions are lower than national figures, the numbers of fixed-term exclusions from secondary schools remain high despite a fall of 12% over the last year.

70. Educational provision for those who do not attend school is good. The aim to return children and young people to mainstream schools or into further education and training is in line with the authority's drive for inclusion. This is emphasised when those at risk of permanent exclusion from primary schools or the early years of secondary schools remain on the registers of their schools while at pupil referral units. The quality of the authority's pupil referral units is good, as judged by inspection. The education of children and young people who receive home tuition is closely monitored and challenged. Similarly, clear systems are in place to track the whereabouts of children who go missing to ensure that readmission to school is a smooth process.

71. A good range of recreational activities is available for children and young people. The developing extended school provision, supported by specialist staff, provides good opportunities for children to take part in sport, music and arts activities. Holiday programmes offer a similar range of opportunities. The emphasis on sport is well illustrated by the commitment reflected in the strategic framework for sport and physical activity in Cumbria and the Cumbria Disability Sport Association. However, the good provision of activities alone is

not sufficient to encourage the most vulnerable young people to participate. A key weakness is that leisure passes are not universally available for looked after children or those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and that concessions are not given to carers.

72. Children and young people who are looked after attain above national averages for 1+ GCSE or equivalent; however, national figures are low. Almost all have a personal education plan to which most children actively contribute. They are generally well supported in school and the looked after children educational support team monitors progress of children within and outside the county boundaries well. Elected members take an active interest in the attendance and attainment of looked after children through the Corporate Parenting Group. However, too many are not in full-time education and are not entered for examinations. Their attendance is unsatisfactory. Initiatives such as the recent deployment of education coordinators in children's homes are only just beginning to have an impact.

73. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported as they move through school. Inspection evidence indicates that most make good progress. The statements of special education needs are timely, with almost all being issued within 18 weeks, which is higher than the national median. Devolved funding to schools supports inclusion well and provides good flexibility of resources, notably for those children who require specialist provision.

Making a positive contribution

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

75. Support for young people to develop socially and emotionally is good. There are well developed mentoring and peer mentoring schemes in schools to help young people to form positive relationships with their peers and to handle transition. There are also opportunities in the community to develop confidence and raise self-esteem, for example, through workshops provided by Connexions.

76. The support provided for young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups, to help them manage change and respond to challenges in their lives is adequate. Effective programmes are in place in schools to promote pupil care and welfare and freedom from bullying, for example, through the Healthy Schools programme. There is effective multi-agency work to support children in need of protection, and in the transition from school to work or further education. Support for young carers where it exists is good, but a thorough audit of the needs of all young carers has yet to be completed. Agencies are increasingly working together to offer a wide range of effective family support which is helping to tackle problems of family breakdown and dysfunction.

77. The authority and its partners show a strong commitment to improving opportunities for participation and to achieving the Hear by Right standard. Large numbers of schools have effective school councils and many young people are enjoying helping to influence aspects of school life, for example, in the recruitment and selection of school staff. There are also increasing opportunities to become involved in the planned development of other services and policies. The involvement of young people in the anti-bullying strategy steering group is a model of good practice for engagement. There is evidence of emerging consultation with hard to reach groups, including rurally isolated and BME young people, leading to improved understanding of their needs. Young people are enjoying the range and quality of approaches used and these are resulting in high quality contributions. These contributed to the development of the CYPP; however, the extent of young people's involvement was too limited. Young people's views are not consistently being used to influence the development of services and some young people feel they are not sufficiently able to influence services in their communities. There is no consistent framework in place for the evaluation of consultation.

78. There are robust strategies to reduce anti-social behaviour, offending and re-offending through multi-agency working, but the impact is inconsistent. Good performance on avoiding permanent exclusions from schools and targeted work, for example by Connexions and the Fire Service, are contributing to reducing anti-social behaviour by retaining more young people in employment, education and training. The planning and delivery of youth work are improving across the county, which is beginning to enhance the engagement of young people in purposeful activity; examples of particularly strong work were seen with some of the most vulnerable young people in the more deprived communities. However, the impact of this work is not yet to be seen consistently across communities and many young people in the most deprived communities visited are not engaged.

79. The reduction of offending and re-offending rates is not consistent across the county. Where multi-agency interventions are taking place, for example Prevent and Deter, they are having an impact on offences and in the severity of crimes committed by some of the young people who are re-offending. The Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategic Partnership is targeting an expansion of multi-agency intervention through Youth Inclusion Programmes (YIP), junior YIP and other targeted work in schools across the county. The police and youth work services are successfully using contracts to engage young people involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. These interventions are increasingly leading to improved outcomes for many young people involved.

80. Adequate arrangements are in place for children and young people who are looked after to make a positive contribution. A representative group, Action4, meets regularly with elected members of the corporate parenting group. Most children who contribute to and some who chair their statutory reviews speak positively about their experience. However, levels of participation in statutory reviews is inadequate and significantly below that of similar

authorities. Recent action has been taken to improve this position but this is at an early stage. Satisfactory arrangements are in place for looked after children to access independent advocacy and in the management of representations and complaints.

81. The arrangements for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make a positive contribution are adequate. Good progress is being made in developing support programmes in the community but these are not always sufficiently integrated with mainstream provision even when appropriate.

Achieving economic well-being

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

83. The action taken in Cumbria by partners to support families in maximising their economic well-being is good overall. The availability of childcare across Cumbria is adequate and increasing, and is regularly monitored. Information for parents and carers about the range of financial and other support available to them is good, and there is collaboration between the Children's Information Service and Jobcentre Plus to ensure the dissemination of relevant information. There is a good range of courses and other support services for families. There are effective arrangements in place to minimise travel costs for young people in education and work.

84. The way in which young people aged 11–19 are helped to prepare for working life is good. Connexions and learning providers collaborate effectively on targeted initiatives to engage those young people who are not in education, employment or training or at risk of being so. The Summer Learning and Skills Programme has successfully introduced considerable numbers of young people to post-16 opportunities over the past five years, with around half achieving accreditation for some aspect of the programme. Connexions also ensures that impartial information, advice and guidance on education, training and employment is available to all 13–19 year olds. It has been commissioned by the 14-19 Pathfinder to work with providers in the successful development of the area prospectus, piloted in the west.

85. There are good initiatives involving schools and work-based learning providers to ensure that learners have experience of vocational education. Vocational tasters and the young apprenticeship scheme are being developed across the county. The successful peri-chef initiative in the Kendal area is taking college-based curriculum expertise out to secondary schools to benefit both learners and teaching staff. Outcomes for young people in work-based learning are good. Schools are supporting young people in developing the skills for enhancing their employability and financial literacy, and for making informed choices effectively. However, a significant proportion of young people interviewed lacked motivation and a sense of direction.

86. The coordination and planning of 14–19 provision are very good. There is strong strategic planning, leadership and monitoring by the council, with robust action to drive up quality and a particularly strong commitment to partnership working. There is good strategic partnership working between the council, the LSC and Connexions to develop the 14–19 agenda across Cumbria. There is very good collaboration and partnership working at area level, with area development managers 14–19 having a key role in successfully pulling partnership working together at a local level. Strategies are suited to the needs of the area, but close team work between the area development managers ensures that good practice is shared where appropriate. There is good collaboration between the colleges, with the four general further education colleges having set up a company to give better coherence to bidding for work and quality assurance.

87. Adequate action is taken to ensure that young people have decent housing. Although there is variability in the performance of different housing trusts, some are particularly high performers and some are very actively involved in partnership working to improve and benefit the communities in which they are based. There is insufficient emergency housing, and some young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities experience difficulties in accessing suitable housing.

88. Care leavers are adequately supported to prepare for independence, with some identifying very good benefits of consistent support, whilst a few do not feel fully engaged. There is a good policy for financial arrangements for care leavers. Policies and processes have been strengthened to ensure timely completion of pathway plans and allocation of personal advisers. Most care leavers live in suitable accommodation and recent multi-agency action has improved access and reduced shortfalls in provision. Effective monitoring and strategies are in place to support entry to employment, yet some young people have difficulty in finding work.

89. Arrangements to help children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve economic well-being have improved significantly and are now good overall. The Summer Learning and Skills Programme in 2005 successfully targeted young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion that remains in education beyond age 16 is high. Most young people have a key worker, if not a social worker, and receive support from Connexions. There is an effective multi-agency transitions group in place and there are three specialist transitions workers in social care and a transitions worker in Connexions. A new transitions protocol is in place and is being implemented, but outcomes remain variable.

Service management

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

91. The council's ambitions for children's services are good. The CSA has a clear and ambitious vision which is shared by the CYPSP. This is supported by a strong commitment to developing children's services and to improving the life chances of all young people in Cumbria. The CYPP articulates the vision well and highlights that there are a number of areas that need further development, including locality working, preventative strategy and resource allocation. The CYPP is not based on a sufficiently detailed analysis of needs. There are areas where defining activities and linking these to targets are not fully in place and this limits the partnership's current capacity to measure fully its outcomes for children and young people.

92. A clear vision is in place for the commissioning of acute and preventative services through a network of local centres across the county, and there is all-party support both for the development of a children's trust and the shift to local delivery of services. Most staff and partners are signed up to this vision, although some front line staff are yet to fully understand the implications of the development. There is a developing track record of notable improvement, including safeguarding services, education and youth services. However, cultural and organisational change is not yet consistently impacting on service delivery and outcomes for young people across the county.

93. The engagement of young people in the strategic planning and setting of ambitions for children's services has been limited. Although there has been some involvement of children and young people in the development of the CYPP, the plan does not pay sufficient attention to the views of most young people and particularly those from vulnerable groups. However, the involvement of children and young people in decision-making on new developments and initiatives is improving. The CSA is beginning to effectively involve them in the decision-making process of major projects, such as school reorganisation. There are some good examples of engaging with young people and acting on their requests, for example, in improvements to teenage health services.

94. There is a clear approach to the development of a management structure combining area working with the central coordination of strategic management. However, the implementation of this is at an early stage and is not yet supported by detailed local implementation plans.

95. Prioritisation is adequate. The new management team has established clear priorities for the future development of the CSA. There are clear priorities in place for ensuring the development of a children's trust and joint commissioning with associated aligned and pooled budgets. Progress towards the development of a trust has been rapid over the last 12 months, but there remains much to be done. There is a clear framework for joint planning and commissioning; however, joint commissioning of services is underdeveloped and current commissioning arrangements are fragmented and fragile. There is increasing alignment of budgets, but the use of pooled budgets is yet to be achieved.

96. The CSA has clearly highlighted key priorities for improvement and has allocated resources accordingly. The council has a track record of supporting children's services within its financial planning and has effectively passported government funding for education. Additional funds have been allocated to good effect to underperforming services, such as the youth service, and to generic areas of weakness such as information technology.

97. The CSA has a comprehensive understanding of gaps in its workforce capacity and has improved its recruitment policies and training programmes to address them. The CSA has provided financial incentives for the recruitment and retention of social workers and the council's current job evaluation programme has the potential to further improve capacity in children's services. Across the partnership as a whole, workforce planning is underdeveloped; there has been no audit of skills to assess potential gaps in implementing a commissioning trust and locality working.

98. The council is achieving adequate value for money overall in children's services. Cumbria is a high spending authority compared to similar councils with outcomes that are good in education and satisfactory in social services.

99. Partnership working is strong. There is a range of effective multi-agency pilots and cross-council partnerships involving Connexions, the police, health services, the fire service, schools and the youth offending service, but there remains much to do to extend these developments effectively across Cumbria. A structured approach to project management is helping to deliver projects within the CSA, such as school reorganisation and the introduction of the integrated children's system.

100. Performance management in children's services is adequate. There is a clear structure within the CSA on monitoring, reporting and challenging service performance. The explicit links between the CYPP, CSA service plan, section plans and individual staff appraisals are strengthening a culture of performance management within children's services. These improvements are being supported by investments in information and communications technology and the introduction of the balanced scorecard. Monitoring of the partnership's performance is underdeveloped; the scorecard does not encompass all partnership information and the board has only just adopted a performance management framework. The extent to which performance management is embedded varies across the services delivered through the CSA. There are weaknesses in the comprehensiveness and use of health data, information on children with disabilities and the monitoring of providers of placements for looked after children. Nevertheless, there are a number of examples where performance management is strong, for example, the monitoring of progress against the Victoria Climbié Inquiry recommendations and in the school improvement service.

101. The capacity of the council and its partners to deliver improvement is good. Leadership and management capacity of children's services is strong. There is strong political and senior management leadership and a commitment to resource the development of the CSA. This leadership from the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director has helped improve communication with partners and has secured their commitment to the vision for children's services in Cumbria.

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

1. The council is performing adequately in the provision of services for children and young people. Overall outcomes are adequate but there is variation between areas reflecting socio-economic diversity. Senior leadership is good and there is strong political commitment to continuing to improve outcomes for children and young people. Ambition is strong and there is effective partnership working through the CYPSP. There have been improvements in provision in children's social care and the youth service, which were previously areas of identified weakness. Education services perform well. The council currently provides adequate value for money in its delivery of services to children and is appropriately targeting funding to priorities. The council's capacity to improve outcomes for children and young people is good.

2. The new Corporate Director has acted swiftly to establish a new management structure to deliver integrated preventative services, but this is not yet fully embedded. There is a well-defined strategy for service development. A range of pilot activities has been successfully implemented to demonstrate new ways of working. There are clear and appropriate priorities in the CYPP. However, the plan was not based on a sufficiently detailed analysis of need, some performance measures lack precision and the number of young children involved was too low. Overall performance management is adequate, with a clear structure for monitoring, reporting and challenging service performance. The management of the children services authority is adequate.

3. The council's partnership working with health services is improving. Schools and early years providers collaborate well with health professionals to promote healthy living. The council contributes significantly to multi-agency initiatives targeting particular problems such as teenage pregnancy. The provision of residential respite care for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is inadequate.

4. On the evidence gathered by the joint area review, children and young people appear safe. The most vulnerable children are protected effectively. Overall outcomes for looked after children are adequate. However, access to early support services is inconsistent, and some young people from BME backgrounds are unable to access services that are sensitive to their cultural needs. Services for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have improved and are adequate, but some aspects of joint working are underdeveloped. The support for young carers is inconsistent. Arrangements to manage the provision of care have improved, but there remain areas for further improvement.

5. The council contributes to an effective strategy for childcare and early years education. The majority of schools are good or better. Standards of attainment are generally slightly above the national average. Pupils achieve well

in the majority of schools. The council provides effective support for school improvement and to encourage school attendance. The majority of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well in schools and looked after children's attainment is slightly above the low national rates. However, the attendance at school of some looked after children is too low. Overall there is good provision for leisure and recreation, but the strategies to encourage the participation of the most vulnerable young people are underdeveloped.

6. Young people make good progress in their personal and social development and many make a positive contribution to the development of their schools and local communities. The involvement of young people in the development of council services and plans is improving, but this is not yet consistent across the council or local communities

7. The council is working effectively with partners to support young people in achieving economic well-being. The strategic approach to planning for 14–19 provision between the council and its partners is very good. The number of young people, who are not in education, employment or training, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is low. Although adequate action is taken to ensure that young people, particularly the most vulnerable, have access to suitable housing, the provision of emergency housing is inadequate, and some young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are unable to access suitable housing.