

Joint area review

**London Borough of Croydon Children's Services Authority
Area**

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
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Introduction

1. The most recent annual performance assessment (APA) for the London Borough of Croydon judged both the council's children's services and its capacity to improve as adequate.
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 investigations were also carried out:
 - impact of the partners' strategy in engaging with vulnerable young people to reduce exclusions and raise attainment
 - impact of the partners' strategy in engaging with vulnerable young people to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.

Context

4. Croydon is an outer London borough situated south of the city and bordering Surrey to the south and the boroughs of Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark to the north. It has the largest population of all the London boroughs (340,000), of whom 82,000, almost 25%, are under the age of 18. Diverse Black and minority ethnic communities comprise 36% of the population, speak over 100 languages and include a significant number of refugees and asylum seekers. Around 40% of children and young people are from Black and minority ethnic groups, although this varies by age group from 35% of those aged 16-17 to 45% of children aged under five.
5. At the time of the review, there were 1,050 children and young people looked after by the local authority, of whom 700 were unaccompanied asylum seekers. There were also 230 children who were the subject of child protection plans.
6. Croydon is a socio-economically diverse borough. Although ranked 21 out of 33 London boroughs in terms of overall deprivation, it has some wards with low levels of disadvantage and others which are amongst the most deprived in England. The employment rate, at 74.6%, is among the highest in London, but wages are often low.

7. Around 52,000 pupils attend 126 schools, including 89 primary, 20 secondary and six special schools, and six pupil referral units (PRUs). Thirty-three percent of Croydon's children attend school outside the borough. There are four maintained nursery schools and 739 private or voluntary early years settings (594 child minders, 87 day nurseries and 58 pre-school groups). At the time of the review, there were 15 children's centres and plans in place for another four to be opened by April 2008.

8. Post-16 education and training are provided by six schools and three Further Education Colleges (Croydon, Coulsdon and John Ruskin). Eight work-based training providers operate in the borough. Education to employment provision is managed by London South Learning and Skills Council, providing 353 places. Adult and community learning, including family learning, is provided by Croydon Adult Learning and Training Service.

9. Primary health care is provided by the Croydon Primary Care Trust (PCT), which is coterminous with the local council. Acute hospital services are provided by Mayday Healthcare NHS Trust and mental health services, including child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), are provided by South London and Maudsley NHS Trust.

10. Croydon was one of the 35 national Children's Trust pathfinder authorities. A Director of Children's Services post was created in April 2007, along with a new Children, Young People and Learners Department which brought together children's social care, education services and adult and community learning. At the time of the review, the department was undergoing significant reorganisation to provide a more integrated structure. A number of recent appointments had been made to senior management posts.

11. Children's social care services are provided through four field social work teams, which include a central referral and assessment team and an unaccompanied asylum seekers team. The Department of Children, Young People and Learners manages four children's residential care homes, including a unit that provides short breaks for children and young people with disabilities. Croydon's fostering service provides 181 foster carers. Prevention services are provided through two family centres, both of which are commissioned from the voluntary sector.

12. Services to children and young people who have offended or are at risk of offending are provided through the Croydon Youth Offending Team (YOT). There are no young offender institutions in the area.

Main Findings

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

- The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people at risk or requiring safeguarding is good. Effective partnerships, good early intervention and prevention services and

robust child protection systems ensure that children and young people are safeguarded well. Innovative services provide good protection for vulnerable children, particularly those at risk from domestic violence or sexual exploitation. Some young people in the youth justice system and children excluded from school are less well served.

- The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people is good. Most looked after children, including unaccompanied asylum seeking children, receive good care in local, high quality placements. Their health and educational needs are met well and they are well supported in preparation for independent living. Families receive good support to prevent children and young people needing to become looked after.
- The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate. Early identification and intervention for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. Many children and young people make good progress in education and their needs are well met by local services. However, in mainstream schools, the quality of provision varies widely. A shortage of specialist special educational needs (SEN) places also means that too many pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are inappropriately placed or awaiting placement.
- The impact of the partners' strategy in engaging with vulnerable young people to reduce exclusions and raise attainment is adequate. Standards of attainment are improving overall, but this masks a situation where not enough schools consistently demonstrate good or better leadership and teaching. This impedes the progress of many pupils, particularly boys from White working class and African and Caribbean heritage. Some progress is being made in improving attendance and reducing exclusions, but there is still much to do. Asylum seekers and young carers are well supported.
- The impact of the local partners' strategy in engaging with vulnerable young people to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour is adequate. Partners have a good understanding of the patterns and causes of crime and anti-social behaviour committed by young people. Work with families and to promote community cohesion is good. The partnership has identified low educational attainment as a key factor in contributing to young people's engagement in crime. Not enough is done to deter young people who have committed serious crime from re-offending.

- The management of children's services is adequate overall. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) is ambitious and partnership working is strong with good use of the voluntary sector to increase capacity. The quality of action plans to deliver priorities is variable. There is strong financial management and good value for money but there is limited leadership capacity due to interim appointments in some key posts and weaknesses in some schools. Performance management is inconsistent and has been insufficiently robust in some areas, such as monitoring and challenging the performance of schools.

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	2
Capacity to improve	2

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
- ensure all children who are excluded from school receive their statutory entitlement to education.

For action over the next six months

The local partnership should:

- implement the new anti-bullying strategy with particular attention to targeted preventative actions and collation of data about the incidence of bullying in the area

- ensure that all looked after children have access to consistent social work support
- reduce exclusions, particularly for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in secondary schools
- improve school attendance by targeting persistent non-attendance and schools with high absence levels
- improve the capacity of the partnership to support young people who have committed serious crimes
- ensure that arrangements are in place to monitor performance consistently across children's services and take timely action to remedy weaknesses.

For action in the longer term

The local partnership should:

- ensure that new arrangements, for example through Local Delivery Partnerships and Integrated Youth Support, address the needs of vulnerable young people who do not meet the threshold for social care services
- improve multi-agency assessment and care planning for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including timely transition planning
- increase the capacity within short breaks services to meet the needs of families with children with disabilities
- improve the leadership and teaching in schools so that more pupils have access to better and consistent learning.
- improve achievement levels for boys of Black African and Caribbean heritage and those from white working class families
- ensure that children and young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups, are consulted on and are able to influence service planning
- ensure that all action plans to deliver priorities clearly state resource requirements, milestones and target outcomes.

Equality and diversity

14. Issues of equality, diversity and human rights and improving outcomes for vulnerable groups are addressed satisfactorily in the CYPP. Many services are targeted effectively to meet young people's diverse needs and well-established

partnership working with the voluntary sector ensures good engagement with many minority groups. There are effective targeted actions to raise the attainment of some vulnerable groups, but school improvement processes are having insufficient impact on raising attainment for Black and minority ethnic pupils and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in some schools. Too many of these pupils are excluded from school and are not receiving appropriate provision. The needs of looked after children, including the high number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children, are well met.

Safeguarding

Inadequate



Adequate



Good

X

Outstanding



15. 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 prevention and early intervention work.</p> <p>Effective and innovative work to reduce risks to children from domestic violence through the family justice centre.</p> <p>Innovative partnership work to prevent sexual exploitation.</p> <p>Safe and prompt systems for handling child protection and other referrals.</p> <p>Effective, committed and well led Local Safeguarding Children's Board.</p> <p>Effective auditing and evaluation of social work practice.</p> <p>Good training for staff.</p>	<p>Insufficient coordinated action to reduce the incidence of bullying.</p> <p>A significant number of children not receiving 25 hours of educational provision.</p> <p>Weak safeguarding of young people subject to youth justice orders.</p>

16. Most safeguarding outcomes are good and better than those achieved by similar authorities. There is a positive culture of safeguarding and strong inter-agency partnership working so that most vulnerable children receive effective services. The latest APA judged children's services in the outcome area 'Staying Safe' as good. Satisfactory progress has been made in implementing the recommendations.

17. Early intervention and prevention services are good and include very effective extended schools and children's centres. There are good plans to develop these services further with appropriate targeting and continuing good use of voluntary sector provision. Well-managed parenting programmes are accessible and culturally sensitive. Once identified, young carers are well supported.

18. Services to support young people's health and well-being are mostly good. There is generally good provision of, and access to, CAMHS, including good early identification and health promotion and timely CAMHS assessments for young people referred by the YOT. However, children and young people with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities and some young people in the criminal justice system find it harder to access treatment. The transition from CAMHS into the adult service for children and young people with attention deficit and/or hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism has improved following the latest APA letter, through the appointment of a transition worker. The drug and alcohol service provides effective support for young people with drug or substance abuse, including good preventative work in schools and colleges. The teenage pregnancy strategy has a high profile and commissioned services are having some impact. There is a downward trend in conception rates among teenagers, although the national target for reduction has not yet been met. There is good involvement of schools, including PRUs, in the Healthy Schools project.

19. There are good, well-targeted initiatives to reduce road traffic accidents. The number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents is reducing much faster than that nationally and has already exceeded the 2010 target. Bullying is a concern for children and, for a minority, can impact on school attendance and behaviour. Schools and other organisations are offering individual responses to the problem but the partnership is not using data on bullying and racist incidents to target action in particular schools and this reduces its effectiveness. There is a draft anti-bullying strategy and implementation plan.

20. At the time of the review around 90 children out of school were not receiving the statutory weekly entitlement to 25 hours of education. Attempts to tackle this unsatisfactory situation were being frustrated by a shortage of specialist SEN places and the effects of this on other settings.

21. Very good innovative partnership work through the Family Justice Centre is having a positive impact in improving protection for children and families who are affected by domestic violence. There is some very good work to prevent children going missing, and an innovative multi-agency project including the police and Barnardos supports children who are at risk of sexual exploitation. Arrangements to identify the whereabouts of children and young people are sound. Fear of crime is reducing and there is some good work to promote community safety and community cohesion, for example through the extensive Positive Activities for Young People programme and youth work. The recent

Youth Offending Service inspection identified that some aspects of safeguarding arrangements are not fully in place for a significant number of young people supervised under youth justice orders, for example the service does not undertake sufficient vulnerability assessments.

22. There are good multi-agency working arrangements, including with the Borders and Immigration Agency to identify children that are trafficked. There is satisfactory work to raise the awareness of private fostering arrangements although, despite this, notification levels remain low.

23. There are effective social care arrangements including safe and prompt systems for handling child protection and other referrals. Effective assessments ensure children and families receive an appropriate response. Detailed screening assessments are undertaken so fewer referrals progress to initial assessments than in similar authorities. The majority of assessments are timely, in-depth and of good quality and contribute to good planning. There has been good preparation for the implementation of the Common Assessment Framework which is planned for this year. However, not all partners have a sufficient understanding of social care provision so, in a minority of cases, refer children and families to social care when they would be better served by being signposted directly to other services. There is an effective out-of-hours team which communicates well with other services.

24. Relatively few core assessments are undertaken, and while those that are done are of good quality, the council is aware that there is more work to do to ensure these are well targeted. The children's services strategy is to invest in early intervention and prevention services, and thresholds for social care intervention are consequently high. Once children and families reach the thresholds the work undertaken is effective. Good family support services deliver well targeted assessment and intervention services for many children in need and their families, however the recent Youth Offending Service inspection identified that there is insufficient support for some troubled young people who do not meet the threshold.

25. Children are well protected through appropriate use of formal child protection procedures. Numbers on the child protection register remain lower than in similar authorities, but are increasing more quickly. The system of managing case conferences and planning for children on the child protection register is robust. All conferences are held within the appropriate timescales and effective planning ensures few children remain on the register longer than two years and few need to be re-registered.

26. Partnership arrangements to help keep young people safe are good. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board is ambitious, appropriately challenging, has good monitoring arrangements and addresses equality and diversity issues well. Good systems are in place for auditing practice and there is good strategic learning from serious case reviews. Multi-agency public protection arrangements are effective. Partners have mostly good systems in place for

vetting new staff and undertaking regular Criminal Records Bureau checks on existing staff. There are good audit arrangements in place to ensure good practice in the recruitment of agency staff across the council. The Safeguarding Board is taking action to improve practice further, including developing a robust system to monitor recruitment arrangements in schools. Suitable arrangements are in place across agencies for the management of allegations against staff.

27. Staff supervision is good and there is good access to well targeted, wide-ranging external and internal training at all levels, including mandatory multi-agency safeguarding training which is valued highly by staff. The partnership has been involved in a number of research projects and evaluations and is involved in both London and national groups. It uses these opportunities well to improve local services.

Looked after children and young people



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Effective, flexible response to meeting the needs of an increasing number of asylum seeking children.</p> <p>Good services to prevent children and young people needing to become looked after.</p> <p>Effective collaboration between the unaccompanied asylum seeker's team and the Border and Immigration Agency.</p> <p>Good quality local placements and good placement stability.</p> <p>Very good support for care leavers regarding income maximisation and securing suitable good quality housing.</p>	<p>Some older looked after children in the care leavers service do not have allocated social workers and this impedes their overall experience of being in care.</p> <p>Care planning for some children and young people is disrupted by frequent changes of social workers.</p> <p>Young people are not consulted consistently at a strategic level, and when they are consulted they do not receive feedback.</p>

29. Looked after children receive good support from highly committed staff. Their care, health and educational needs are met well and they receive good support when preparing for independent living. The number of looked after

children has increased rapidly over recent years, due to the rising volume of unaccompanied asylum seeking children who arrive at the Border and Immigration Agency offices in Croydon. Asylum seeking children make up around two-thirds of the total number of looked after children and young people in Croydon. Services are responsive and flexible to meeting these increasing demands. The latest APA judged outcomes for looked after children to be good, and the council has a comprehensive plan in place to further improve performance.

30. There are effective services to support families and prevent children and young people from becoming looked after, including the increasing and good use of family group conferences. A wide variety of innovative diversionary projects and activities achieve good engagement with young people whose families are in crisis.

31. The creation of the unaccompanied asylum seekers' team has enabled young asylum seekers to receive a service tailored to their needs. Good partnership work with the Border and Immigration Agency, including the location of a duty team on site, has enabled greater consistency in the handling of applications, and improved the experience for children and young people arriving in the UK.

32. The high number (82%) of looked after children and young people who receive regular health and dental checks is in line with that in similar authorities and nationally. Successful action has been taken to improve access to General Practitioner services for unaccompanied asylum seeking children and workshops are provided on sexual health and relationships. Healthcare audits are undertaken and learning from these has led to a sharper focus on health promotion. There is good early multi-agency planning and support for young women who become pregnant. Action is being taken to improve sexual health and drugs screening for looked after children. The CAMHS service has a multi-disciplinary team offering good, prompt assessment and support.

33. Looked after children live in safe environments. Regulatory inspections confirm that residential homes provided by the council are safe and well managed with a high number of appropriately qualified staff. A recent inspection of the council's fostering service assessed the service as ensuring good outcomes for children and young people. This service provides a wide range of training and support for foster carers with good involvement of care leavers in delivering this training. Successful action has been taken to increase the number of local foster carers and most newly looked after children are placed within 20 miles of Croydon. Younger unaccompanied asylum seeking children are placed rapidly with carers who are from the same ethnic background whenever possible. Placement stability is good and better than in similar authorities. Most young people feel they are very well supported in their foster homes. The percentage of looked after children in foster placements or placed for adoption and the proportion of looked after children adopted are now higher than for similar councils. Recent changes have speeded up the adoption

of relinquished babies and new case-tracking procedures ensure that proactive plans are in place for all children who may require a permanent placement. Robust action has been taken to address all the requirements following an inspection of the adoption service in July 2007.

34. Transfer of cases between social work teams are generally well managed. The increasing and unpredictable volume of work in the leaving care and independence service means that a small proportion of older looked after young people do not have allocated social workers and their day to day contact with the service is through the duty team. The council manages this to limit any negative impact on outcomes for young people by careful risk assessment and prioritisation in the allocation process. However, this arrangement does impact on the young people's access to consistent social work support and on their confidence in the service at a time of major transition in their lives. Additionally, some looked after children have experienced frequent changes of social worker, and this has led to delay in some cases. The council has recently taken appropriate action to address this by reducing the number of teams involved when cases are allocated and simplifying the process of case transfer.

35. The attainment of looked after children in education is satisfactory. It is better than that for looked after children nationally but remains below that of their peers. The percentage of looked after children achieving at least five or more GCSE passes at grades A*–C has been consistently higher than similar councils and England for the last three years. The Looked After Children in Education (LACE) service provides a wide range of effective intervention for young people, and newly arrived asylum seekers are well supported in education. The progress looked after children make in education is closely monitored and school attendance is good. Looked after children and young people are encouraged and supported to achieve highly and all achievements are recognised and celebrated at an annual event. Designated teachers value the regular training and networking sessions provided by the LACE team.

36. A strong independent reviewing service ensures timely reviews, with good participation from looked after children (93%), which is higher than the national average. Care leavers have made a highly valued contribution to staff selection interviews and to presentations to students on social work courses. However, children in care and care leavers' groups have little opportunity to meet with other participation groups and are not targeted for inclusion in representative panels such as the UK Young People's Parliament support group. When young people are consulted, they are not clear that their views are informing and/or changing practice. The corporate parenting panel is relatively new but it is providing a good level of challenge and is clearly ambitious for young people. There is a strong commitment from council members to ensuring good outcomes for all looked after children and young people. The recommissioned independent participation and advocacy service is working positively with young people to establish a Children in Care Council, representatives of which will link directly to the corporate parenting panel. Offending rates for looked after children are low.

37. High quality multi-agency support prepares care leavers well for independence. Unaccompanied asylum seeking young people receive good specialist support from a dedicated Connexions personal adviser. The council has been very resourceful in finding accommodation for care leavers, and a robust Quality Assurance Framework is in place to ensure that supported housing meets minimum standards for young people. Care leavers are given excellent support regarding income maximisation. The number of care leavers in education, employment or training is much higher than the national average, and about 40 care leavers are being supported at university, which is very good.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Inadequate



Adequate

X

Good



Outstanding



38. **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 early identification and intervention to support young children and those entering the borough with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.</p> <p>Good short break services for young people with health and/or complex needs.</p> <p>Good youth service and voluntary sector contributions to cultural and leisure activities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.</p> <p>The number of young people with learning difficulties who find and keep a job is well above the national average.</p>	<p>Insufficient capacity within short break services to meet the needs of all families.</p> <p>Unified systems for multi-agency assessment and care planning are not well developed.</p> <p>A shortage of specialist SEN places means that a small, but significant, number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is inappropriately placed or awaiting placement.</p> <p>Planning for transition to adult services is not always timely.</p>

39. Early identification and intervention to support young children and those entering the borough with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. Their significance is recognised in the new SEN strategy and they form a key thread in the Early Support Programme. The primary health care team makes a good contribution to the early identification of children's health needs and the ABC early intervention team is particularly effective in identifying and addressing the needs of very young children with behaviour problems.

40. There are other good examples of services that meet the needs of children and young people and their families well. All children and young people who receive a service from the Children with Disabilities Social Work Team have a comprehensive assessment. High quality short break services include home-based support provided through 'Hospital at Home' and respite care provided for young people with complex needs by the Calley Down centre. There is increasing take-up of direct payments and families in receipt of these receive good advice to identify appropriate providers. However, the overall capacity within short breaks services is insufficient to meet the needs of all families.

41. The partnership is at an early stage in developing integrated provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families. Good plans to further integrate services are taking effect as structural changes within the Children, Young People and Learners Department, co-location of staff and improved working practices, such as through the developing Early Support Programme, are being implemented. However, unified systems for multi-agency assessment and care planning are not well developed.

42. The effectiveness of multi-agency prevention services to support children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and their families is adequate. Counselling provided by the voluntary sector is accessible and of good quality. Parents and carers of children with ADHD are benefiting from improved support and there is satisfactory access to CAMHS for this group of children where therapeutic groups and activities have been particularly effective. The provision of and access to CAMHS overall are generally good and waiting times are within national guidelines. However, some children and young people with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities wait too long for diagnosis and treatment.

43. The CYPP review recognises the need to increase the focus of priorities on children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The council has started to address the need to reduce the number of children in out-of-borough educational placements by developing greater expertise and capacity within its own schools, for example through the newly opened resource for children with complex needs at St Giles School. The establishment of the high cost placement panel has ensured more targeted use of placements. However, there remains a shortage of specialist SEN places within the borough. As a result, a small but significant number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is inappropriately placed or awaiting placement in settings that are full.

44. Inspection findings show that in the majority of schools, children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good or better progress and education in most special schools is good or outstanding. However, in mainstream schools the quality of provision varies widely and teaching is not of consistently good quality. Where weaknesses are identified, they are not always tackled with the speed and rigour needed to secure rapid improvement. Although schools have been urged by the council to map their SEN provision, no formal feedback has been given to headteachers on the findings. Special Educational Needs Coordinators networks are well established and training for staff in understanding and meeting the needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families is good. There is a stronger commitment to inclusion in primary than in secondary schools.

45. Statements of special educational need are now completed more quickly, but performance still lags behind most other authorities and the council's own target. Some statements are not sufficiently specific. The availability of therapeutic services such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech and language therapies is good and these services are effective in removing barriers to learning. Service redesign has improved access to speech and language therapy through joint working with school and early years staff. Timescales for provision of home equipment and adaptations for children and young people with physical disabilities are too long.

46. The Youth Service makes an important contribution to the range of cultural and leisure activities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The quality of the various clubs and projects is good. More widely, children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported in making applications to the Youth Opportunities Fund, with notable success. Participation in activities by young people with physical disabilities is good, including through challenging overseas trips and outdoor activities. A good range of activities is provided through the voluntary sector.

47. The effectiveness with which the voices of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are listened to and acted upon is adequate. Young people are offered good support to participate in their reviews and contribute to decisions. There are some good examples of young people influencing service development through school councils or specific focus groups. The Parents in Partnership Group seeks the views of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their parents/carers with vigour, but the group's membership and representation are limited. General consultations with children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also occur through focus groups, surveys and specific events, but the impact of these various mechanisms is variable.

48. Transition arrangements for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are adequate, with good support provided at the key ages of transfer at five and 11. Most young people at 14+ have a transition plan and

these are generally of satisfactory quality and monitored well. The council has produced a useful 16+ transition guide for parents and young people. Connexions advisers provide good support for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from the age of 13, including helping them prepare for learning, training and employment post-16 through youth work activities. The effectiveness of their transfer to adult services is adequate. The council recognises that detailed transition planning often does not start early enough. Communications between children's and adult services are satisfactory, but transition processes are not always seamless.

49. The overall percentage of young people in education, employment and training (EET), including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, has increased and the number whose whereabouts is unknown is reducing. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have access to a growing range of courses, including at Entry Level, in nearby further education colleges and the number attending increased by over 15% to 880 during 2006/07. The small number of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who find and keep a job is well above the national average.

Other issues identified for further investigation

Impact of the partners' strategy in engaging with vulnerable young people to reduce exclusions and raise attainment

50. **The impact of the partners' strategy in engaging with vulnerable young people to reduce exclusions and raise attainment is adequate.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good quality support for asylum seekers and young carers.</p> <p>Good systems in place to identify, challenge and support schools.</p> <p>Good quality support for young children with behavioural difficulties in the early years.</p> <p>Good mentoring and other support programmes for individual/groups of young people.</p>	<p>Boys of African and Caribbean heritage and from White working class families making slow progress compared to most other pupils</p> <p>The number of pupils who are persistently absent is too high.</p> <p>Gaps in provision for a small but significant number of excluded pupils.</p>

51. Overall standards in schools are improving and are in line with those nationally at all key stages. Children are helped to make a good start to their education in early years. However, this is not built upon consistently and there is considerable variability in pupils' achievement between schools. Targeted work by the council has helped pupils of African and Caribbean heritage to

achieve standards significantly better than in most similar authorities. However, achievement levels for boys both from this group and from White working class families are significantly below those achieved by their peers. Good support from the LACE team ensures that looked after children achieve well. Provision for asylum seekers is good and young carers are well supported and helped to make sound progress.

52. Teaching and leadership in a significant number of Croydon schools are not consistently good and this impedes the progress made by many pupils, including boys of African and Caribbean heritage and from White working class families. The council understands the problems and is sharply focused at senior level on 'narrowing the gaps'. Increasingly, it has shown itself willing to take decisive action to bring about improvement. This has recently included initiating the closure and/or re-designation of several schools and the tackling of weak school leadership. There has been some success in closing the gap between the most successful and weakest schools, but high teacher turnover has been a barrier to improvement.

53. The council now has some good systems in place to identify, challenge and support individual schools. The school improvement strategy has been revised and a new Assistant Director has been appointed to oversee the work of the school improvement service. The service has provided effective support for individual schools designated as 'causing concern' and contributed well to aspects of teachers' wider professional development. The introduction of the School Improvement Board with wide membership is specifically designed to strengthen accountabilities and raise standards in schools. School specific monitoring groups now report directly to the Board and action planning to support weaker schools has improved. Five Local Delivery Partnerships have recently been set up to promote greater collaboration between schools and with other agencies. School improvement partners have begun to challenge schools robustly and leading/advanced skills teachers are being used increasingly to help build school improvement capacity.

54. The council's contribution to tracking and improving school attendance is adequate, although the issue remains a cause for concern. The number of pupils who are persistently absent is still high, particularly in a small number of hard-to-shift schools. Although attendance improved in 2006/07, the council did not achieve its target. It is now acting more decisively to reduce absence, but much of the useful work has taken place in the last six months. The capacity of the Education Welfare Service is limited, but there is good differentiation of support to schools and priority is given to targeting persistent non-attenders, including through good support to families. The youth service also provides good support for young people refusing to attend school.

55. The council's contribution to managing pupils' behaviour and reducing the high rate of exclusions is adequate. In early years, there is good support for young children with behavioural difficulties; families are well supported and the children's centres coordinate training on behaviour issues well for staff from

different agencies. The respite centre at the Victoria House PRU provides good outreach support for primary schools when behaviour is unsatisfactory. The new Behaviour Task Group is providing a strong lead to schools; it has given the need for good behaviour a higher profile and sharpened the lines of accountability. Good partnership work with London Challenge has improved awareness of behaviour issues in several schools and a more clearly defined role for the school specific monitoring groups has improved the response to poor behaviour in the weaker schools. The council has created a virtual team led by a specialist coordinator to work with schools in supporting children and young people with ADHD. This is relatively new, but has already been shown to be a useful model.

56. Overall numbers of exclusions from schools are high and young people of African and Caribbean heritage and White working class boys are over-represented. The council's strategies have recently resulted in a sharp reduction in permanent exclusions, but temporary exclusions, from certain secondary schools and among younger pupils, have increased markedly and are now much too high. Targeted work by the Bridge to School PRU has been successful in promoting reintegration of pupils back into mainstream schools. However, provision for a small but significant number of children and young people remaining out of school is neither timely nor sufficient. Reducing exclusions is a key focus of the School Improvement Board.

57. The council and its partners in community organisations provide a good range of well targeted and effective mentoring programmes. The Key Stage 2 Black Children Achievement Project and the Black Raising Achievement Programme at Key Stage 4 are very effective in motivating and inspiring pupils of African and Caribbean heritage. The Aim Higher project provides a good range of activities to raise young people's aspirations and self-esteem and encourage them to think about the advantages of higher education. Peer mentoring is particularly effective in supporting pupils who are new arrivals at school. Supplementary schools make a good contribution to accelerating achievement among an increasing number of young people of African and Caribbean heritage.

Impact of the partners' strategy in engaging with vulnerable young people to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour

58. **The impact of the local partners' strategy in engaging with vulnerable young people to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour is adequate.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Assessment and understanding by partners of the patterns and causes of crime and anti-social behaviour committed by young people.</p> <p>Early intervention work with families, whose children are at risk of involvement in youth crime.</p> <p>Partnership work to challenge gang culture and promote community cohesion.</p>	<p>Work with the most challenging offenders to reduce the risk of re-offending.</p> <p>Lack of support for some vulnerable young people.</p> <p>Low educational attainment of young people in some schools.</p>

59. The local partnership's assessment and understanding of the patterns and causes of offending behaviour among young people is very good. Only a small minority of young people in Croydon engage in crime and anti-social behaviour. The overall crime rate in Croydon is relatively low but the proportion of local crime that is committed by young people continues to be relatively high and is increasingly serious. Fear of crime locally is beginning to reduce but it remains a concern for young people. The significance of contributing factors such as poor parenting, the growing role of gang culture as an extreme form of peer pressure, substance misuse, mental health concerns and low educational attainment is well understood by the local partnership. This is helping inform planning, including the targeting of resources and interventions. Detection rates have improved and there is now a lower tolerance among partner agencies of anti-social behaviour.

60. The youth inclusion support programme and the YOT contribute well to multi-agency preventative work, although the YOT is less successful in its work with young people who commit more serious offences, particularly those who have received custodial sentences. The YOT has begun to involve victims of crime in helping to make young people more aware of the impact of their offences through restorative justice. The YOT is monitoring the small number of first time offenders who commit serious offences that result in a custodial sentence; an interagency plan has been developed to tackle the overall increase in first time entrants to the youth justice system. These activities are stretching the YOT's resources and the work has needed to be carefully prioritised. High thresholds in social care and the lack of alternative provision results in some vulnerable young people not receiving the necessary support at the end of the YOT involvement.

61. Targeted work has resulted in an 18% reduction in youth crime levels since 2003–04 and a recent modest reduction in re-offending rates, though this is falling more slowly than in similar authorities. Early intervention work with families to reduce offending and anti-social behaviour is good. However, for

young people in custody and those who have committed serious offences, arrangements to reduce the risk of their re-offending are identified as a serious weakness in the recent YOT inspection. The probation service has agreed to second two probation officers to the YOT to support work with young people leaving custody, but has so far been unable to fill these posts permanently.

62. Parenting programmes are well established in a number of targeted locations and are promoting more positive relationships between children and their parents or carers. Mentoring of young people at risk of underachieving is becoming more systematic. The council has set up Europe's first Family Justice Centre to tackle domestic violence. Commissioned voluntary agencies have been particularly successful in maintaining extended contact with families, targeting persistent offenders and areas of high deprivation well. Council spending is augmented by efficient use of neighbourhood renewal funding and the Children's Fund.

63. The work of the local partnership in challenging the impact of gang culture and promoting community cohesion is good. Increasingly effective Safer Neighbourhood teams, enforcement officers and a particularly active and widespread group of voluntary agencies work closely with community groups to help young people resist peer pressure to engage in anti-social behaviour and to reduce opportunities for gangs to operate. Many young people develop and maintain friendships across ethnic groups and there is little racial tension in the borough. There are few incidents of racial hate crime, and where they occur, they are usually one-off incidents that are not repeated

64. Targeted work by the Youth Service and partners to provide alternative activities to engage young people is consistently good. In one example, joint working by neighbourhood wardens and youth workers identified reasons why young people were not engaging in leisure activities and used mobile resources to fill gaps in provision. In another case, the 'Potential' social cohesion group successfully re-engaged a group of young people affected by the murder of a friend to achieve well at GCSE and become youth leaders themselves.

65. The local partnership has identified the involvement of young people in drug/substance misuse, particularly alcohol and cannabis as a key factor in offending and anti-social behaviour. Collaborative work by the Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) and CAMHS is good and this also extends to supporting parents/carers who are users. As a result of better diagnostic and referral work, more young people are now taking part in drug treatment programmes. The DAAT, CAMHS and YOT teams collaborate well to challenge young people's view of what constitutes serious substance misuse. Use by young people of Class A drugs and gang involvement in supplying drugs is low by comparison with some other parts of London.

66. The partnership has identified low educational attainment as a key factor contributing to young people's engagement in crime and anti-social behaviour. Strategies to raise the attainment of children and young people and improve

their participation in post-16 EET are adequate. Many schools and colleges are offering a more varied curriculum to attract and engage disaffected young people. Of five schools being targeted by the council because of low attainment at Key Stage 4, four have seen GCSE results improve significantly over a sustained four year period, although the percentage of young people achieving five good GCSEs is still below 50% in three of the four schools. Non-attendance and exclusions remain too high in a number of schools. The Supplementary Education Project provides good support for teenage young people from Black and minority heritage groups who have been excluded from school. The learning mentoring initiative replicates this work with young people with challenging behaviour.

67. Connexions analyses well some of the reasons for young people not engaging in EET, and a number of multi-agency projects are in place to improve the situation. The number of young people who are not in EET has fallen significantly, particularly among young people who are looked after, care leavers and teenage mothers. Participation in EET by young people who have offended has improved to nearly 70%, which represents good progress in closing the gap with other young people. The CITY (Croydon Investing in Tomorrow's Youth) business academy was very effective in 2007 in raising aspirations and self-esteem of 16 and 17 year olds not in EET.

Service Management



Capacity to improve



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
Good partnership working with a strong commitment to improve outcomes for children and young people.	Monitoring and management of performance has been insufficiently robust in some aspects such as the performance of schools.
Effective use of the voluntary sector to enhance capacity.	Variable quality of action plans to deliver priorities.

Strong financial capacity with good budgetary management and effective strategies to secure value for money.	<p>Limited managerial leadership capacity due to interim appointments in some key posts and weaknesses in some schools.</p> <p>The views of children and young people are not used systematically to inform strategies.</p>
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69. The latest APA judged capacity to improve, including the management of children's services, as adequate. An area for development identified during the APA was to improve partnerships to ensure better communication, collaboration and cooperation with schools. Some newly developed structures and approaches address this aim but it is too early for these to have had an impact on improving these important partnerships.

70. The ambitions established by the council and its partners for children and young people in Croydon are good. Achieving better outcomes for children and young people is a clear strand in the Sustainable Community Strategy, which adds emphasis to the drive for improvement. This is underpinned by the CYPP which is ambitious with a good focus on effective partnership working, for example the establishment of five local delivery partnerships each led by a headteacher. The ambitious programme of children's centres is being delivered in partnership with the voluntary sector and is beginning to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people. The developing ambitions for the Building Schools for the Future programme are being well linked to the review of secondary school provision to maximise ownership and impact.

71. A comprehensive needs assessment based on data and evidence from a range of sources informed the CYPP. The council and its partners have recognised the need to continue to revise the needs analysis in order to reflect the changing demographics of the area. Engagement of the voluntary sector through the Children and Young People's Network is good and influences strategic planning. However, the views of children, young people, parents and carers are not systematically used to inform strategies. There is a strong, shared understanding from the vast majority of stakeholders, including staff, of the ambitions for children and young people in Croydon and a clear commitment and enthusiasm to achieve these.

72. Prioritisation to improve outcomes for children and young people is adequate. Improving these outcomes is now an explicit priority for the council with a strong focus on school improvement. Children and young people are not a priority for the PCT this year, but are so for the financial year 2008–09. The CYPP clearly sets out an agenda for action that is understood by partner and community organisations and gives adequate attention to equality and diversity issues. The review of the CYPP enabled partners to identify gaps and priorities have been amended as a result, for example further developments in prevention and early intervention services.

73. Strategic accountability is clearly set out for each priority. Action plans are in place but vary in quality; some do not clearly state resource requirements, milestones and target outcomes, which results in a lack of clarity as to whether plans are achievable. Resources to deliver priorities are clearly identified by the council through its robust budget setting process but these are not explicitly identified across the children and young people's partnership. The council has plans in place to align the education and social care budgets in the coming financial year, but the aligning of budgets between key partners to deliver priorities is at an early stage of development. However, the focus on key priorities is maintained, resources are shifted to meet these and difficult decisions are made and sustained, such as the closure and reprovision of some schools.

74. The overall capacity of the council and its partners is adequate. There is strong political leadership for the children and young people's agenda, particularly from the Lead Member. The Chief Executive of the council also shows strong commitment and leadership, exemplified through chairing the School Improvement Board. Significant organisational change is still underway with the development of the new integrated department. A Director of Children's Services has been appointed and new experienced senior officers have joined the department in the last two months. Nevertheless, some key leadership posts remain filled on a temporary basis which impedes longer term planning and limits the capacity for further improvement.

75. Partnership working is good with wide membership from a range of partners in the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. Building on current strengths, governance and accountability arrangements are being reviewed to reflect the newly integrated department. There is a strong, shared will to improve services and good use has been made of the voluntary sector to increase capacity through for example, the provision of children's centres and to secure a broad range of youth work. However, relationships with some schools remain a serious concern and hinder progress. The council is working to address this key challenge but it is too early to see sustained impact.

76. Financial capacity, management and value for money are good. Budget setting and monitoring are robust. Areas of high and low cost are understood well and action is taken where appropriate to address these. For example, the establishment of the high-cost placement panel has strengthened gate keeping and evaluation and as a result reduced the numbers of out-of-borough placements. School balances are reducing well and a claw-back scheme has been introduced. Private Finance Initiatives have been used to good effect for schools supported by strong project management.

77. The council and its partners are addressing most important capacity issues well. There is no overarching commissioning strategy for children's services. The development of a joint commissioning strategy is in the early stages but there are some examples of joint commissioning and a planning, performance and commissioning unit is being established to increase capacity in this

important area. The council has a workforce plan for children's services but a joint workforce strategy with partners is in the early stages of development. A good range of strategies is being used to improve recruitment and retention, but despite this, staff turnover and vacancies in some areas, particularly in teaching, remain high. Capacity in the workforce has been increased through a significant reduction in sickness absence and good use of training for staff.

78. Performance management is adequate. It is effective in many areas but it has not been sufficiently robust in some key areas such as monitoring and challenging the performance of schools. There is a clear corporate approach, and a new corporate electronic performance management system is in place but this is only used for a small number of key indicators for services for children and young people. A good system for monitoring performance is in place for children's social care services and an overarching performance framework for children's services is being developed. Good quality assurance systems in children's social care are used well to target areas for improvement and develop services. Effective systems are in place for the routine auditing of social care case files with examples of thematic audits, for example of children on the child protection register for over two years, leading to the implementation of robust action plans.

79. Children and young people are increasingly being involved in the management of performance and/or assessing the quality of services, for example mentoring services but this lacks a systematic approach. A participation strategy is being developed to address this. There is a clear process for managing complaints about children's services which leads to some learning. Nevertheless, overall knowledge management is underdeveloped as data analysis does not inform service planning on a consistent basis.

80. Capacity for further improvement is adequate. There is a track record of improvement in most key areas and performance is broadly in line with similar areas. There are examples of effective change management resulting in improved outcomes for children, for example in children's social care and health services. However, there are a number of areas, particularly in relation to education, where there has been insufficient improvement, and action to address weaknesses, particularly in relation to vulnerable groups, has not been timely or robust. The partnership has a good analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and has now prioritised key areas of weakness for improvement.

Annex A

MOST RECENTLY PUBLISHED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN LONDON BOROUGH OF CROYDON

Summary

Croydon Borough Council consistently delivers services for children and young people at an adequate level with some significant strengths. The council's contributions to being healthy, staying safe and achieving economic well-being are good, with strong partnership working and effective alignment across services. The contributions made to enjoying and achieving and making a positive contribution are adequate and there are strengths in each area. Some progress has been made in addressing the main recommendations of the APA carried out in 2006. However, aspects of the council's work such as raising standards in science, improving attendance and reducing exclusions remain areas where further improvement is necessary. There is a strong commitment from the council to develop high quality, locally based partnerships which represent all relevant groups and to ensure improving outcomes for all children and young people.

The full annual performance assessment can be found at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=3058&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa_2007_306.pdf

Annex B: Summary of the Enhanced Youth Inspection Report

Main findings

1. The quality of youth work in Croydon is satisfactory and the local authority sufficiently secures its provision. Young people enjoy the activities on offer and achieve well, gaining useful social and practical skills, although this achievement is not often formally recognised. Those taking part in the specialised sports and performing arts projects and involved in decision-making bodies benefit a great deal and value their learning highly. Although there are limitations in the overarching curriculum policy guidance, the programme is managed adequately to provide a good range of activities. Youth work attracts young men and women equally. Generic work is adequately resourced; better resourced projects serve targeted vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities well. Staff understand the needs of the area and take pride in promoting good relationships among young people and in the community. Managers and staff make good use of established local partnerships to enrich and extend opportunities for learning and to provide high quality counselling, advice and guidance. Managers have used their longstanding knowledge of the service to shape provision, improve some areas of performance and provide relevant training for staff. However, shortcomings in the use of management information and in quality assurance monitoring systems, with little contribution from young people themselves, limit improvement in the key planning and evaluation areas of youth work practice. Weaknesses identified during the inspection in implementing Criminal Record Bureau clearance policies were dealt with promptly and effectively. The quality of premises is too variable and many are uninviting; a programme of refurbishment and rebuilding is in place but it is too soon to see the effect.

Key aspect inspection grades

Key Aspect		Grade
1	Standards of young people's achievement	3
	Quality of youth work practice	2
2	Quality of curriculum and resources	2
3	Leadership and management	2

*Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale
4: excellent / outstanding; 3: good; 2: adequate/satisfactory; 1: inadequate*

Strengths

- Young people's achievements are good, in particular in specialised arts and sports projects and decision making forums.
- Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities participate in a good range of provision including exciting and challenging activities.
- Strong partnerships greatly enhance the range and quality of provision.
- Positive relationships between young people and adults are universally evident; young people and adults actively promote inclusive attitudes.

Areas for development

- Too few young people benefit from the incentive of gaining formal recognition for their achievements.
- Too much accommodation is of poor quality.
- Curriculum policies do not provide a practical framework for planning and evaluation.
- Too little use is made of young people's views in planning and evaluating youth work.
- Quality assurance monitoring systems are insufficiently rigorous and systematic to bring about improvements.

Annex C

CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Outcomes for children and young people in Croydon are generally adequate and improving. The physical health of children is good and rates of infant mortality are in line with those nationally. Most children get a good start to their education in the early years. Standards of attainment are improving each year and are similar to those nationally at all key stages. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall but there is wide variation in the progress made by children in different schools. The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) is satisfactory.

2. Service management in Croydon is adequate. There is strong political leadership for the children and young people's agenda and an ambitious CYPP. Partnership working generally is strong with good use of the voluntary sector to increase capacity. The quality of action plans to deliver priorities is variable. There is strong financial management and good value for money but there is limited leadership capacity. Performance management is inconsistent and has been insufficiently robust in some areas, such as the performance of schools.

3. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good with improved outcomes in a number of areas, for example increases in the levels of most immunisations. Participation in the Healthy Schools programme is progressing well with good participation by PRUs. The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy is having a positive impact, and the rate of conceptions among teenagers is reducing. Provision of, and access to, CAMHS and drug and alcohol services are mostly good. The health needs of looked after children and care leavers are met well. Early identification and intervention for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good, although multi-agency assessments and care planning are generally not well developed.

4. Children and young people appear safe and arrangements to ensure this are good. Effective partnerships, good early intervention and prevention services and robust child protection systems ensure that many children and young people are safeguarded well. Innovative services provide good protection for most vulnerable children, particularly those at risk from domestic violence or sexual exploitation. Some young people in the youth justice system and children excluded from school are less well served. Families receive good support to prevent children and young people needing to become looked after. Most looked after children receive good care in local, high quality placements and they are well supported in preparation for independent living. Effective partnership work with the Border and Immigration Agency ensures a good response to the needs of newly arrived asylum seeking children. There is a good range of high quality short breaks services for children with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities, although there is insufficient capacity in these services to meet all families' needs.

5. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and to achieve well is adequate. Although standards of attainment are in line with those nationally, the council has been slow to take robust action to challenge and support those schools which are not providing a consistently good enough education; this affects the progress of many of their pupils, particularly those from some vulnerable groups. Targeted action by the council is impacting on improving outcomes for some vulnerable groups such as looked after children and some Black and minority ethnic groups. Action to improve school attendance is now adequate and there has been some recent improvement in the high rate of permanent exclusions. The quality of youth work in Croydon is adequate and young people who participate in youth service activities enjoy themselves and gain a good range of skills from contact with capable adults.

6. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is adequate and they provide good support for children and young people to achieve economic well-being. Partners have a good understanding of the factors influencing youth crime and anti-social behaviour and targeted work has achieved some reduction in offending and re-offending. However, not enough is done to deter young people who have committed serious crime from re-offending. Children and young people are increasingly involved in the management of performance and/or assessing the quality of services but their participation lacks a systematic approach. The strategy for 14–19 education is developing well. The number of young people who are NEET has fallen significantly, particularly among young people who are looked after, care leavers and teenage mothers. Connexions advisers provide good support to young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but the preparation for transfer of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to adult services is not always timely.

7. The capacity of council services to improve is adequate. There is a track record of improvement in most key areas and performance is broadly in line with similar areas. There are examples of effective change management resulting in improved outcomes for children, for example in children's social care and health services. However, there are a number of areas, particularly in relation to education, where there has been insufficient improvement, and action to address weaknesses, particular in relation to vulnerable groups, has not been timely or robust. The partnership has a good analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and has now prioritised key areas of weakness for improvement.

Annex D

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 Croydon 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 focussing 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 and those who deliver services for them).