

# Joint area review

**Cambridgeshire Children's Services Authority Area**

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## Review of services for children and young people

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

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## Introduction

1. This joint area review was conducted using the arrangements required under Section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of seven inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), the Healthcare Commission (CHAI), the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and the Audit Commission. The review was undertaken according to the requirements of the *Framework for the inspection of children's services*.

2. The review was linked to the contemporaneous corporate assessment of the local council by the Audit Commission and its findings are represented in the relevant part of the corporate assessment report.

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

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

5. The review took place in two stages consisting in total of three weeks over a seven-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
- planning documents
- information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day care provision
- evidence gathered during the contemporaneous youth offending service inspection
- briefings from staff within inspectorates, commissions and other public bodies in contact with local providers.

6. The second stage included inspection fieldwork. This included studies of how far local services have improved outcomes for a small sample of children and young people, some of whom have the most complex needs, and a study of provision in one neighbourhood in the Oxmoor area of Huntingdon. It also

included gathering evidence on 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. The review also drew on evidence derived from the simultaneous inspection of fostering and adoption services undertaken by CSCI.

## Context

7. The Cambridgeshire children's services area covers the university city of Cambridge, several medium-sized towns, including Ely, Huntingdon, March, Wisbech, St Ives and St Neots, and large rural expanses including the Fens and South Cambridgeshire. The county shares borders with Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Lincolnshire and Peterborough and is the fastest growing county in the British Isles. Population and housing growth, and associated infrastructure changes represent significant current and future challenges for the council and its partners. The total children's population of Cambridgeshire is around 139,000, which will continue to increase as the projected growth in the area continues.

8. The majority of children and families in Cambridgeshire are white British with an increasing population of children and young people (currently around 7%) from minority ethnic families. Migrant workers, mainly from Poland and Lithuania, have been attracted to the area by agricultural employment. Cambridge itself has a vibrant mix of people from a wide range of countries associated with academic studies and international high-tech companies. Although Cambridgeshire is seen as an affluent area, with income levels and property values in and around Cambridge significantly higher than national averages, this disguises the fact that there are pockets of high deprivation, particularly in the rural areas covered by the Fens. Whilst overall the local economy is thriving, there are areas where employment is below the national average. There are also marked health inequalities across Cambridgeshire and between the least and most deprived districts.

9. Cambridgeshire has a history of good partnership working and this forms the foundation for the current delivery of services for families and children and for the future development of integrated provision. The Office for Children and Young People's Services (OCYPS) was formed in April 2006 and incorporates education and social care services, the youth service and youth offending services, Surestart and Connexions. The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), comprising representatives of all the major children's organisations and the voluntary sector, oversees the delivery of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). This plan is described as the Big Plan and is in a range of formats for use by professionals and children and young people. Over 1,800 children and young people in Cambridgeshire were consulted in the

development of this plan. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is operational and is chaired by an independent chairperson.

10. Services in Cambridgeshire for children and families are delivered through central, area and locality teams. The county has benefited from a pilot Trust arrangement based at St Ivo School in St Ives. There is a strong focus on locality working with three areas in Cambridgeshire potentially forming Children's Trusts. Primary health services in Cambridgeshire were amalgamated into a single Primary Care Trust (PCT) in October 2006, a development that has been widely welcomed and seen as more conducive to effective integrated working. Addenbrookes and Hinchingsbrooke NHS Trust Hospitals provide accident and acute health care to children and families in Cambridgeshire. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are provided through the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Mental Health Partnership Trust. These all fall within the NHS East of England Strategic Health Authority Area.

11. There are six nursery schools/22 nursery classes, 203 primary schools and 30 secondary schools in Cambridgeshire providing approximately 76,200 places. Additionally the county provides seven special schools with 790 places and five pupil referral units (PRUs) with 183 places. There is a Schools for Growth strategy in place to develop a considerable number of new schools across Cambridgeshire in line with the substantial and projected population growth over the next 10 years and beyond.

12. In Cambridgeshire, there are in the region of 370 children and young people who are looked after. At the time of this review 62 children were placed outside the county in residential settings: 28 in residential children's homes, 17 in residential schools and 17 in therapeutic/specialist settings including residential parenting assessment. Approximately 270 children are placed in foster homes at any one time, 71 out of county and the rest in in-house foster placements. Within the county there are several independently provided residential care homes accommodating a significant number of children and young people placed by other local authorities.

13. Cambridgeshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC) includes provision in Cambridgeshire and in Peterborough. The LSC is a strategic partner with the local authority, colleges, training providers and schools in addressing the 14- 19 strategy. Post-16 education and training is provided by three further education colleges, 11 sixth forms across the county, two sixth form colleges in Cambridge, and 11 work-based training providers. Three organisations provide Entry to Employment schemes. The colleges collaborate in five centres of Vocational Excellence, and one of the sixth form colleges is a Beacon. Adult and community learning, including family learning, is provided by the local authority. Train to Gain provision is coordinated by the colleges.

## Summary Report

14. **Outcomes for most children and young people in Cambridgeshire are good.** For a minority of children and young people, including some who are in need, or are leaving care, or who have complex health needs or disabilities, there are some inequalities in service provision, mainly due to historical resource allocations, service access pressures and changing patterns of need. The partnership is working hard to address these issues and there is good evidence that outcomes for these minorities are being improved.

15. Health outcomes for most children and young people are generally good. Waiting lists for speech and language therapies are currently too long in some areas and there are some delays in accessing services and completing assessments. Strategies to reduce teenage pregnancy rates are in place and the rates compare well with neighbouring areas. Health support for looked after children and young people leaving care is adequate overall, but for young people leaving care at 16 or for disabled young people in transitions, the quality of services is variable. There have been improvements in the delivery of CAMHS following increased investment in these services, but there is still scope to improve waiting times further. The provision of mental health services to the youth offending service (YOS) is effective. Children and young people have very good access to accident and emergency services.

16. From the evidence gathered during the review, most children and young people appear safe and services overall are adequate. Road and traffic accidents have reduced and there are effective strategies in place to deal with bullying. Children and young people are generally aware of how to keep themselves safe and all staff exhibit considerable care and sensitivity in dealing with issues of risk. During this review, there were very good examples of decisive action to respond to referrals where children were deemed to be at risk of harm. The county has focused attention on Fenland leading to an increase in the rates of children in need referrals. The rate of child protection registration has also increased in this area as new resources have been provided to raise awareness and improved access to services. Re-registration rates are good and reflect effective planning once children have entered the child protection system.

17. Children and young people in Cambridgeshire achieve well and educational attainment overall is good. Attainment rates at early years and Key Stages 1 to 4 are also good. Targeted work in Fenland has resulted in improved educational outcomes in the area and in three of the four secondary schools the proportion of young people achieving five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE has improved significantly and the number of primary and secondary schools below the floor targets continues to decline. Educational support for the small group of children who are educated other than in school is adequate; it is good for looked after children, with increasing opportunities and flexible support provided through the looked after children team. Children and young people with disabilities also receive good educational support.

18. Children and young people exhibit a strong sense of pride in their schools and local communities. There is good engagement of the Youth Offending Service (YOS), the rate of youth crime remains low and children and young people are less likely to become the victims of crime than other comparable areas. Of the cases examined during the YOS inspection, 81% showed that the young people had not been involved in criminal activities during the year, significantly better than the average national performance levels. Good inter-agency working, including with the police, is leading to a reduction in offending; in addition, there are targeted interventions where crime rates are higher. Children and young people in Cambridgeshire have good opportunities to present their views and ideas with an increasing influence on decisions that affect them. Effective processes are in place to gain the views of children and young people and to ensure their voices are heard. Elected members show strong commitment to their corporate parenting responsibilities. Children of migrant workers, a significant number of whom are based in Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, are well supported by the Cambridgeshire Race Equality and Diversity Service (CREDS) through the provision of Portuguese, Polish and Lithuanian support workers and translation of useful documents. A Speaking Out project to address racism and bullying issues involves 74 Traveller children and 24 schools.

19. Support for young people as they move into higher education, training and employment is generally good. The rates of achievement and attainment for 14-16 year olds are above the national average and rising, and progression into higher and further education is also high in most areas. Whilst performance in Cambridge is exceptionally high, it is also rising sharply in the rural areas above neighbouring counties.

20. Care leavers and other vulnerable young people live in appropriate accommodation and have adequate support, but choice in terms of type and location remains a problem in some parts of the county. The rural Pathfinder has attracted much needed investment into Fenland to improve educational prospects and aspiration. Homelessness is reducing and access to suitable housing for young people and families is also improving. Good partnership practice between colleges, special schools and social employers has led to well co-ordinated programmes to promote independent living skills. 14-19 provision and post-16 provision is increasingly well coordinated between the local authority and its partners with good outcomes for most young people. For some disabled young people access to suitable post-16 college provision is less readily available. Partners are developing appropriate strategies to address this. Children and young people with more complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support as the result of effective multi-agency working.

### **The impact of local services**

21. Effective joint working for children has been facilitated through the establishment of the OCYPS and the CYPSP in April 2006 alongside the LSCB. All the planning groups have ambitious targets and exhibit considerable drive



and energy to build children's services in the county and to promote inclusion. The direction of travel is good and capacity to improve, both for the council and partners is also good. Partnership working is enabling joint services to extend opportunities in the areas of greatest need and to respond quickly to new challenges as they arise. There is good evidence of service impact where resources have been specifically targeted.

**22. The impact of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is adequate.** The amalgamation of health services into a single PCT is leading to more consistent joint working and there is a strong focus by partners to reduce health inequalities for children and young people across the county. There are good examples of collaborative working including reduced rates of smoking and alcohol misuse, the promotion of healthier lifestyles, healthy schools initiatives and reduced teenage pregnancy rates. Mothers are well supported in antenatal and postnatal care. Healthy lifestyles and good parenting skills are actively encouraged in all settings, with some good examples of targeted services for harder to reach groups in the county. In Fenland there has been effective targeting of services and resources. Effective examples of health promotion initiatives have resulted in improved partnership working between children and young people, schools and voluntary agencies. Combined, these are helping to build capacity in areas where needs are the greatest.

23. Dental health in the county is comparatively good and immunisation rates are consistent with, or are above, national averages. Physiotherapy services have good impact across Cambridgeshire with low waiting times. In the last three years, effective work has been undertaken to strengthen countywide inter-agency governance in relation to Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy. Occupational Therapy services are fully integrated in most parts of the county apart from Huntingdonshire; this has resulted in some inconsistencies when prioritising referrals. Waiting lists are being actively addressed but Speech and Language Therapy services still have increased waiting times in some parts of the county. Processes to measure the health outcomes of targeted work by the Drug and Alcohol Action Team are used to influence resource allocation. There is good support to enable children with physical disabilities to be cared for at home and in mainstream schools. There is a very good emergency admissions service for children at Cambridge University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Hinchingsbrooke Hospital.

24. Health care provision for looked after children is adequate with an appropriate range of support services and timely accessibility. Health services for care leavers are more variable and this group does not have ready access to looked after children's nurses or a designated doctor. There are some good examples of effective multi-agency working to support children and young people with complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Early intervention schemes for pre-school children are being developed, but at this stage it is not possible to assess their impact.

## Staying safe

25. **The impact of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is adequate.** There has been appropriate management action to address issues of consistency and thresholds in the county, with evidence of improvement. This is particularly so in East Cambridgeshire and Fenland where investment levels in services in the past have been lower. Additional resources have now been provided, with a consequential increase in the number of referrals to children's services. Capacity to respond to the increased demand for services is being well managed. Good work is being undertaken to develop processes for staged interventions and to clarify referral expectations and actions. However, there is a need to strengthen page 10 of the child protection procedures to ensure there is greater clarity regarding levels of intervention in respect of referrals of children in need.

26. The range of preventative services are being extended, enabling children who would otherwise become looked after or involved in child protection systems to be cared for safely at home. The early identification and management of vulnerable pregnant women is a good example, with effective discharge planning for their babies. However, across the county as a whole there are inconsistencies in the speed at which social workers are allocated to cases, in the completion of joint assessments and in the provision of suitable therapeutic and family support services.

27. Good quality information is provided to raise the awareness of children, young people and their families about risks to their safety. Schools are addressing safeguarding measures well and health visitors and family centre staff provide sound advice to parents about safeguarding measures in the home. Effective plans are being implemented to address bullying, domestic violence and other potential risks affecting the lives of vulnerable families. Considerable effort has been made to meet the needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in the county. An equality impact assessment for looked after children was undertaken in the first phase of the programme.

28. When children become looked after, or the subject of child protection plans, care planning and multi-agency protection plans are adequately co-ordinated. However, in some areas the input into joint working by some agencies is not as fulsome as is required to meet the holistic needs of the children concerned. Initial and core assessments of need are generally satisfactory, but in cases tracked during this review evidence of delays in the completion of some aspects of work was noted. The level of practical support for families is generally good, but sometimes continued for too long without a formal re-evaluation of the impact on the children or young people concerned. There is insufficient placement choice and specialist provision for looked after children who are from Black and minority ethnic groups and for other minority communities in the county.

29. The foster care service is good and achieving well in the recruitment, selection and support of carers. Considerable challenges exist in balancing the availability of suitable carers with the need to increase placement choice and to offset the loss of carers through retirement or de-registration. There are no foster placements available for young people remanded into the care of the local authority and few for mothers and babies. There has been a decrease in the numbers of looked after children placed in foster care or with relatives. There are good processes in place to ensure the views of children and young people are listened to, but this could usefully be extended further to fully incorporate the provision of independent visitors and advocates, and more ready access to the complaints and representations systems by children and young people.

30. The high number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children in the county has an impact on overall numbers of looked after children. The considerable investment in family support in the county is leading to a wider range of options before care is considered.

31. Services to support and actively promote the welfare of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are being strengthened. There are some good examples where specific steps are being taken to raise awareness of the needs of disabled children and young people in all settings in the county.

### **Enjoying and achieving**

32. **The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good.** Strong and focused leadership, together with effective partnership working with local, national and voluntary sector agencies, has led to sustained improvements in the quality of educational and leisure provision for children and young people. Support for parents and carers is good, and in early years and primary settings it is having a positive impact on their ability to help children enjoy and achieve. Effective school improvement strategies are continuing to raise standards and achievement, including those of looked after children, Black and minority ethnic groups and Gypsies and Travellers. Enhanced provision for children with autism will shortly be opening in two secondary schools.

33. Good quality performance data is used effectively to monitor performance at school and individual pupil levels including the use of suitable resources and intensive support to those schools where achievement is less secure. Attendance rates are satisfactory in primary and secondary schools. Overall rates fell in 2006, largely due to increases in levels of authorised absence. Attendance is monitored closely by the local authority and the information collected is used effectively to set targets and provide focused challenge; levels of attendance improved in the schools which were provided with additional support from consultants and education welfare officers.

34. Robust systems are in place to track the whereabouts of children missing from school. Permanent and fixed-term exclusion rates are low in both primary and secondary schools. Provision for children educated other than at school is good when they are placed in a PRU, but a proportion of this group, particularly those at Key Stage 3, do not get full-time provision. Support for looked after children attending schools within the county is good.

35. Most children and young people have access to an appropriate range of recreational and leisure activities, including music, creative arts, sports and cultural provision. Participation is sometimes adversely affected by the high cost of access to leisure activities and transport difficulties.

### **Making a positive contribution**

36. **The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good.** Children and young people are increasingly able to influence decisions in their schools and councils are in place in most schools. The Youth Parliament is active and contributes to the national forum. Youth crime is comparatively low, with a reducing rate for first-time offenders. The rate of re-offending remains comparatively low both in regional and national terms. There is considerable effort to reduce anti-social behaviour, with effective community policing and local intervention. The YOS is an active partner on the CYPSP and good links have been formed with CAMHS.

37. Connexions services are now fully integrated, with increasingly effective targeting of personal advisers on the most vulnerable groups. There is good support to help looked after children make a positive contribution and good advice and support available for care leavers. Of the children and young people who are looked after, 90% contribute to their own review of care arrangements. The council and its partners make considerable effort to recognise success and to reward achievement. Young people are becoming routinely involved in the recruitment and selection of staff. A disabled people's forum is being developed for implementation later in 2007. Work is also being undertaken to develop accessible formats to enable disabled children to comment more about their services and where necessary to make representations.

38. Corporate parenting arrangements are formally in place, with strong elected member commitment. Looked after children and children and young people with disabilities are encouraged to participate in making decisions on issues that affect their own lives. Consultation with children and young people is good but they do not always receive feedback on the outcomes of their consultation. The Just Us groups held around the county are helping looked after children, care leavers and the council to address this issue. Individual looked after children and young people are well supported to participate in decisions that affect them.

## Achieving economic well-being

39. **The impact of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good.** There are good arrangements to support families to achieve economic well-being. Families have good access to childcare and advice. 14-19 provision is increasingly well co-ordinated between the local authority and its partners, although work-based learning providers are insufficiently represented. The area has developed many innovative approaches to regenerate local communities and empower families. The level of homelessness is reducing across the county and there are several focused schemes to increase access to suitable housing for young people and families. However, there is still a shortage of suitable accommodation across the county as a whole which is being actively addressed by partners who have set a target of achieving 40% social and affordable housing in all new developments. This target is on course to be met.

40. Well co-ordinated arrangements are in place to promote effective planning for young people with disabilities to help them achieve greater independence. Good partnership work has been established between colleges, special schools and social employers to help young people with disabilities to develop their independent living skills. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have adequate opportunities for progression into further education, but there is insufficient provision for some young people with autism and where the demand for local services is increasing. The council and its partners are taking active steps to extend the range of suitable provision.

41. All 14-16 year olds take part in work-related activities including some exciting enterprise projects. In order to tackle transport deficiencies in the most rural areas the Post-16 Transport Partnership has annually awarded the county the majority of its funding to operate a three mile eligibility distance criterion for free transport. This is enabling more young people to gain access to suitable services.

## Service management

42. **The management of services for children and young people is good overall. The capacity to improve further is good.** Ambitions for Cambridgeshire's children and young people are good. The CYPP links clearly to the *Every Child Matters* outcomes and is ambitious and challenging. Ambitions clearly reflect the diverse nature of the local population, and appropriate consideration of diversity (including ethnicity, rurality and disability) informs the partners' ambitions in the CYPP. The CYPP provides a clear overarching strategic framework for children and young people's services in Cambridgeshire and an effective strategic link to other key plans for the area.

43. Prioritisation is good and children and young people's services are central to two of the three major corporate priorities. Cambridgeshire's CYPSP has clear and consistent priorities for achieving improved outcomes for children and

young people, and outcomes in the plan closely align with those described by children and young people as their key hopes and aspirations.

44. Current capacity is adequate and capacity to improve is good. Leadership, both political and managerial, is strong and increasingly effective in bringing about the changes required and the ambitions of the partnership. Many strategies and policies are still being revised or are being drawn together with the aim of producing better outcomes for children in more equitable ways across the county.

45. The council is the lowest spending in the country, and budgets for the OCYPS are generally lower than comparator areas while achieving similar or better outcomes for most children and young people. The council has a clear focus on value for money and the OCYPS demonstrates a good understanding of areas of relative high cost, including services for looked after children and children placed out of the county in independent social care, education settings and home to school transport. Locality based multi-agency teams to deliver integrated services are being developed with increasing evidence that this way of working is increasing capacity and service effectiveness.

46. Overall, the partnership's self-assessment was thoughtfully produced. It accurately reflects all the key issues, including current strengths, progress to date and immediate challenges. At the time of this review, however, some services provided across the partnership were not fully embedded and it will take more time for the area to show the expected impact and outcomes of all services. Nevertheless, capacity to handle change is good as shown by the implementation of the OCYPS (involving 4000 staff) and the creation of the CYPSP and LSCB to agreed deadlines. Plans to address gaps in services are all in place and are being suitably resourced in most instances. Some uncertainty remains in the funding of some voluntary sector activities as current funding streams come to an end. Partnership responses to external review and inspection recommendations are implemented effectively and appropriately. Suitable attention is being paid to equity and diversity issues across the county and how joint services can respond to the challenges of a fast growing area.

47. Performance management is adequate. However, partners use a range of different systems and tools for reporting and managing performance for the CYPP and for the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The SWIFT system used for social care is not capable of monitoring and reporting on all aspects of performance or of giving the real-time feedback needed by managers. The implementation of a new system is some way into the future and will have considerable training implications for social care professionals and their managers unused to entering data. Good progress is being made in monitoring performance against national indicators. Trends over the past year are good overall.

48. Scrutiny is good and provides a robust challenge to services, for example a recent investigation of transitions to further education, training and employment for young people with special needs. As a result, action planning is underway to respond to most of the review's recommendations as part of the Quality for Children business development area programme.

## Grades

Grades awarded:

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

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

## Recommendations

### For immediate action

- The council should review the risk assessment, allocation to and management oversight of the work of unqualified social workers to ensure that children in need who are referred have clear plans that are comprehensively overseen by managers.
- The LSCB should review page 10 of the child protection procedures to ensure there is greater clarity regarding levels of intervention in respect of referrals of children in need.
- The council should review services to children educated other than at school to ensure they receive full education support.

### For action over the next six months

- The council, its health and other partners should develop joint systems to routinely audit selected cases to ensure managers are routinely signing off work within agreed accountability protocols. Greater attention should be paid to the experiences and views of the children and young people themselves.
- The council and its health partners should review the way they jointly manage the delivery of services to children with complex needs, who are currently or are likely to be placed outside Cambridgeshire, in order to integrate strategic planning, budget planning and the management and monitoring of services.
- The council and its partners should clarify funding issues and continuity of support for those voluntary organisations in the county that provide support to groups of children and young people.

### For action in the longer term

- The council and its partners should increase the provision of work-based learning opportunities.
- The council and its partners should review arrangements for the provision of a children's rights service in the county, including the deployment of independent visitors/advocates and complaints/representations by children and young people.



# Main Report

## Outcomes for children and young people

49. **Outcomes for most children and young people in Cambridgeshire are good.**

50. **Children and young people are generally healthy.** Good progress is being made and sustained in improving health outcomes and most parents are well supported in the health care of their children. Focused work is leading to reductions in both smoking during pregnancy and in conception rates for 15-17 year olds, which at 18.6% is lower than the England average rate. Infant and perinatal mortality rates are in line with national averages and immunisation levels, dental health and breastfeeding rates are all comparatively good. Bridging the gap between the proportion of low-weight babies in areas of the greatest deprivation and lower rates in the more affluent areas remains a challenge. Sexually transmitted infections are in line with national averages with good joint work to reduce levels across the county. There have been improvements to the management of referrals to therapy services, but access in some parts of the county is variable and there is scope to improve access to health services by harder to reach groups.

51. Health services for looked after children are adequate and most children and young people receive annual health assessments. Therapy services, psychological advice, and sexual health advice are easily accessed for this group. Good quality information on other health advisory services is provided for children, young people and their parents or carers. Health supports within transitional planning arrangements for care leavers are less consistent and support for children and young people with mental health needs and placed out of county are variable. Arrangements for the delivery of health services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are improving, but some variability in service quality and access exist across the county as a whole.

52. **On the evidence gathered, most children and young people in Cambridgeshire appear safe.** Families, children and young people are well informed about their general safety in the community. The LSCB is addressing the wider safeguarding agenda to ensure that the most vulnerable groups of children in the county are suitably protected. Partners identify risk appropriately and collaborate well to provide support and protection to vulnerable groups of children. Services are child-centred with an increasing range of family support and preventative services in place. The lack of capacity in some areas results in children being held too long in intake and assessment teams awaiting allocation or transfer to long-term teams.

53. The number of children on the child protection register is stabilising at an average level after a period when the numbers were significantly lower than in other comparative areas. Good quality information is provided to raise the awareness of children, young people and their families about risks to their

safety. Schools address safeguarding measures, and health visitors and family centre staff provide sound advice about safety in the home. Road safety measures have reduced road accidents involving children, at a rate greater than the council's target.

54. Overall, most looked after children and young people live in good quality safe placements, although a significant proportion of children and young people are currently placed out of the county. Stability of placements for looked after children is good. The number of looked after children is reducing. Fostering and adoption services are good and performance of adoption services in respect of looked after children is good when compared to other areas. Adequate safeguarding arrangements are in place to ensure that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are protected.

55. **Children and young people achieve well.** Most children and young people in Cambridgeshire enjoy school and make good progress. Education standards at all key stages improved between 2001 and 2006. At Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, results are above national averages and compare well with those of similar authorities. The proportion of young people aged 16 attaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE is satisfactory. The proportion achieving five or more A\*-C GCSEs, including English and mathematics, is above the national average and is good. The gap in achievement between those in the prosperous parts of the county and those in more disadvantaged areas is closing. High quality and accessible early years provision is available across the county and the achievement of younger children is very good. Pupils make very good progress between Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and satisfactory progress between Key Stages 3 and 4. The attainment of looked after children and children from Gypsy and Traveller communities is improving as the result of targeted work. Attendance is satisfactory overall, but levels of authorised absence increased in both primary and secondary schools in 2006. The levels of permanent and fixed-term exclusions are low.

56. The attainment gap between children from some minority ethnic groups and the county as a whole is narrowing. A strategy was launched in September 2006 and is underpinned by thorough analysis of the outcomes for children and young people from different groups. The Speak Out project involved young people, parents, schools and other professionals in working together to produce information to help address children's fear of racist bullying.

57. **Children and young people have a good range of opportunities to make decisions and take personal responsibility and many make a good contribution to their communities.** Children and young people are increasingly able to influence decisions in their schools and local communities and to comment on the range of services that support them. There is a developing culture of participation and involvement and increasing evidence that this is influencing services. Many schools in the county have successful school councils and there are youth fora that contribute to the making of decisions. Schools recently inspected by Ofsted have been graded as good or

very good in terms of the extent to which learners make a positive contribution to their community. This is also confirmed through the TellUs survey that was undertaken for this review. Many young people are actively involved in volunteering.

58. The rate of youth crime is comparatively low. The number of young people entering the justice system for the first time is decreasing and generally below the rate in similar authorities. Young people aged 10–17 are less likely to be victims of crime than in the rest of the country. There is good joint working between services and the YOS. The pattern on final warnings, reprimands and convictions for looked after children is in line with the national trends. Participation of looked after children in reviews is good. Children with disabilities were involved with the development of the CYPP and with the Youth Bank. Nevertheless, they are less able to contribute to service planning and the council and partners have made this a priority for improvement and service development.

59. There are excellent examples of integration and specialised support to facilitate inclusion, including amongst Traveller children and other minority groups. Work in conjunction with voluntary sector providers to support the needs of young carers is good, although future funding for these schemes is uncertain. The Lead Member for children's services, a group of portfolio members and 'spokes' (a group of members from each political party) provide an effective voice for children and young people at partnership and council level.

60. **Most young people are able to achieve economic well-being and are prepared well for working life.** Success rates are above the national average and rising, and progression into higher and further education is high in most areas. Performance in Cambridge is exceptionally high, but in the rural areas that have been historically under-performing, it is also rising sharply above neighbouring counties. All 14-16 year olds take part in work-related activities including some innovative enterprise projects. A well-established increased flexibility programme partnership between schools and colleges has largely been confined to the less able and has variable success rates. However, recent specialist diploma development offers a wider range of opportunities for all young people to study practical work-related skills.

61. Young people have good access to advice and guidance on careers and on personal matters. The percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training at 16 is very low at 4.45% and very few (2%) young people are recorded as 'not known'. Participation rates for young people with disabilities are also very high. The drop-out at age 17, especially amongst low-skilled youngsters, is marked but is still below national averages. However, too many young people in rural areas enter jobs without training when they leave school. Poor rural access to transport particularly affects disadvantaged or disabled young people.

62. Young people leaving the PRU are well prepared for working life with a wide range of accredited outcomes, but only a third remain in employment or training at 16. Only half of care leavers are in education, employment or training at 16. Level 1 provision for this group is currently insufficient. The quality of work-based learning is rising and success rates are above the national average, but numbers are falling. Although the council is working hard to improve the availability and quality of suitable accommodation, homelessness amongst families and single young people remains a problem.

## The impact of local services

### Being healthy

63. **The work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people in Cambridgeshire is adequate.** There are good examples of health promotion initiatives that have resulted in improved partnerships with children and young people, schools and voluntary agencies to help build capacity such as provision of sex and relationship education and advice. Processes to measure outcomes of targeted work by the Drug and Alcohol Action Team do not assist the best use of scarce resources or the joint commissioning of services to meet projected need. The Healthy Schools programme is providing focused support to children and families and targets for 2006 were met. Action on obesity has been developed and work is about to commence on weighing and measuring pupils in all schools. In one area, multi-agency pre-birth protocols have been developed for early identification of vulnerable children and families and this is providing a clear structure for all professionals, however this has yet to be evaluated. In other parts of the county, there are arrangements to identify and respond to causes for concern. There are some gaps in the availability of school nursing which at times impacts on consistent service delivery.

64. The contribution of health services to common assessment processes for children and young people remains variable. Recent increased investment in CAMHS has led to improved performance bringing the services mainly in line with the national expectations. Waiting times for some CAMHS still need to be addressed. CAMHS protocols with the YOS are good. Nurses in schools and emergency care units receive training from CAMHS and have access to specialist advice. Information for young people explaining how to look after their emotional well-being during difficult times is available across the county. Access to non-acute services is variable due to inadequate provision of Tier 2 services, but plans to progress this are in place, along with plans to improve acute specialist in-patient provision.

65. Dental health and immunisation rates are equal to or above the national average. Physiotherapy services have good impact across the county with low waiting times. Occupational therapy services are part of an integrated service in some areas only and this creates an inconsistent approach to prioritising referrals across the county. Speech and language therapy services have

treatment waits ranging from 12 to 24 months and this is a recognised area for improvement.

66. Children with physical disabilities are increasingly managed at home and in mainstream education, but there is no tailor-made system or care pathway to co-ordinate ongoing needs assessments to ensure consistent standards. There are very good emergency admissions service for children at Addenbrookes and Hinchingsbrooke Hospitals. In some areas, teaching/therapy assistants have extended skills to address gaps in assessments traditionally undertaken by professionals.

67. The health needs of looked after children are adequately met and most children and young people receive annual health assessments. Arrangements to advise and support looked after children are provided by specifically designated looked after children's nurses and paediatricians. Health services for care leavers are less effective and services in relation to young people making the transition out of care and into independence remain variable. There are insufficient autism services, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy services across the county. Good collaboration with health services at a medical PRU ensures that there is provision for pupils unable to attend school for medical reasons.

### Staying safe

68. **The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is adequate.** Safeguarding children and ensuring effective child protection are evident as core elements in the commissioning, planning, delivery and review of all services for children and young people in the county. There has been good work to ensure safe staff recruitment. There are effective and positive relationships between social, educational and health services, the police and the voluntary sector that contributes well to the multi-agency approach to the commissioning and delivery of safeguarding and care. The Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel works collaboratively to protect children from offenders who pose a risk to children. There are good multi-agency processes to establish the whereabouts of children who go missing. The quality of joint safeguarding training is good, although there has been insufficient access to the Joint Enquiry Training for social workers in the last year. Numbers of road traffic accidents affecting children and road deaths have reduced. Good progress is being made in raising awareness in schools about safeguarding and protection issues.

69. Agencies appropriately identify children at risk of significant harm and make timely referrals to children's services. Most responses are appropriate and prompt and there are effective inter-agency relationships to deliver services to reduce risk. Some agencies and professionals do not share or fully understand the thresholds for intervention and page 10 of the LSCB procedures is insufficiently clear. Work is being undertaken in the county to clarify stages of intervention. Overall, the management oversight of the receipt and assessment

of referrals is adequate and there is good evidence from case tracking that processes for oversight have been tightened. Referrals to other agencies or internal services are made promptly, but agencies that refer to children's services are not consistently informed of the actions arising.

70. Child protection plans of all children on the child protection register are reviewed on time. Parents are beginning to be included appropriately in identifying the services their children need and written agreements for working with children's services and other agencies facilitate working in partnership with them. Some case files demonstrate well-organised and well-managed multi-agency work in respect of complex cases, including proactive work from schools, health visitors, social workers, family support workers and, when involved, CAMHS. Staff supervision is good and staff report feeling supported by their managers and having extensive access to them for advice and guidance.

71. Few files contain records of management auditing and of decisions made in staff supervision, and not all files contain relevant information to show that the management of challenging neglect cases includes a considered view on the long-term impact of neglect on children's lives. Arrangements for joint or single-agency interviews with the police, when children report allegations of abuse, are good, follow national guidance and avoid children being interviewed more than once. The IT and IS systems in social care do not fully support the management of work and there is a lack of consistency in how management information is currently being used.

72. Out-of-hours services are sufficiently robust, with high quality staff and management. The team remains small and covers a wide area, including Peterborough. The customer contact centre provides a robust and efficient 'front door' service. The quality of referrals taken through the centre is high, and staff are suitably trained and experienced in handling complex and sometimes distressing work. Contact arrangements are to be extended across the whole county, and this will aid consistency and performance monitoring.

73. Services for looked after children are adequate. Good quality and safe residential, foster care and adoptive homes meet the needs of most looked after children. However, the range and choice of placements is limited, resulting in many children and young people being placed a significant distance away from Cambridgeshire. Foster care services are well managed and major recruitment campaigns are programmed to take place throughout 2007 to increase the number of carers. The choice of placements for looked after children from Black and minority ethnic groups is limited. All looked after children have care plans and personal education plans are independently reviewed. However, reviewing officers do not have easy access to independent legal advice and their authority to challenge decisions in the best interests of children is insufficiently clear. Local and regional work is being undertaken to address this national issue.

74. Support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good for those with the most complex needs. However, for those with lesser or more moderate needs, and for those on the autism spectrum, services are less available. Waiting times for occupational therapy assessments, speech therapy and major adaptations are too long in some instances. Transition arrangements are improving, but despite these improvements, the transition planning between children's and adult services for most young people remains inconsistent. This has been recognised by the council and is being addressed through plans to establish a 14-25 Transitions Team. The arrangements to safeguard children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are adequate. Services for children and young people with complex needs, once accessed, are good. Some families of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not receive cohesive or co-ordinated multi-agency support.

### Enjoying and achieving

75. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good.** Parents and carers receive good support from the council and its statutory and voluntary partners to help children and young people of all ages enjoy and achieve. Effective partnership working between Sure Start, early years settings, primary schools, health and adult learning services enables parents of young children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and from Black and minority ethnic groups, to access a wide range of support which they value. This includes structured learning activities for children and parents, drop-in sessions and access to advice.

76. Strong leadership of early years provision has had a positive impact on standards. A comprehensive strategy is in place to ensure that early years settings are able to offer integrated services to children and families. A recently completed quality framework for self-evaluation will further support the sharing of good practice. Foundation Stage Profile outcomes are consistently above national figures and the attainment gap between children from Black and minority ethnic groups and other children in need is narrowing. High quality and accessible early years provision is available across the county and uptake of childcare placements is high. However, some nurseries have spare capacity as a result of only offering half-day sessions. A review of maintained nursery class provision has commenced.

77. Focused leadership and effective school improvement strategies have had a positive effect on the rate of improvement in standards at all key stages. School head teachers speak positively about the support and challenge they receive from assigned inspectors and school improvement partners. The council has focused its support and challenge effectively in those schools where achievement is weakest. Processes for monitoring the performance of schools are informed by a comprehensive analysis of data and regular reviews involving the partners who are supporting the school to improve. Support to improve the performance of schools identified with weaknesses is good overall. The council

took timely and decisive action to improve standards in the two schools, a secondary and a special school, recently identified by Ofsted as requiring special measures.

78. Inspection outcomes are analysed thoroughly and action taken by the authority is prioritised effectively to those schools in most need. Timely and decisive action is taken to improve standards where performance issues have been identified. The council has Beacon status for asset management and the physical condition of schools is generally good. Planning for school places takes appropriate account of demographic change.

79. Amalgamations of schools to ensure viability and improve educational outcomes are well handled. Wave 4-6 of Building Schools for the Future funding is being targeted well on Fenland secondary schools. Good planning to meet the needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has ensured that in the future most children will be able to attend schools within the county. Two new area special schools, providing integrated services, opened in September 2006 and two mainstream secondary schools will open units for young people with autistic spectrum disorders in September 2007.

80. An appropriate range of advice about admission to schools is available to parents. Parents of early years and primary children get good advice from their children's teachers on how to apply for a school place. All Cambridgeshire children were offered a secondary school place on time, with the majority allocated their first choice. Children with a statement of special educational need and children looked after by the local authority are given high priority for admissions where possible, and efforts are made to place children in schools which help them to maintain extended family connections.

81. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory. The council's monitoring of attendance in schools is thorough, and sound strategies are in place to improve attendance. Targeted actions to promote good behaviour and attendance have had a positive impact in those schools which were identified as needing improvement. Support provided by the national strategies for behaviour and attendance consultants, personal, social, health and citizenship education teachers, educational welfare officers, educational psychologists and the specialist teaching services is well coordinated. Robust systems are in place to track the whereabouts of children missing from school.

82. A good range of recreational activities are provided by schools, the county and district councils across Cambridgeshire. Funding for a number of innovative activities in the creative arts and sports has been secured from a variety of agencies including Sports England, the Arts Council and the Youth Justice Board. Sports competitions and festivals engage young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in a range of sporting events. Children and young people from Gypsy and Traveller communities have taken part in a range of creative arts taster sessions to find out about, and then commission, practising



artists to work with them on a project to express their voice. The council has a comprehensive approach to developing capacity to encourage play. A play officer has recently been appointed to lead on the council's Time and Space to Play strategy. The council provides good training for play workers. District councils maintain an extensive network of play areas and leisure facilities. Most schools provide some opportunities for children and young people to take part in out-of-hours learning that include access to arts, sports and recreational activities. Some parents felt that their children were excluded from these clubs due to costs. There are good and improving opportunities for young people to extend their development through the youth service. However, there is insufficient provision in rural areas and lack of transport is a significant barrier to young people accessing provision in other areas of the county.

83. Looked after children who are placed within the county are well supported in their education by the authority's Education Support Team for Looked After Children. Each school has a designated teacher from the central team who provides one-to-one support for the young people and training for teachers from the school. Arrangements for supporting the significant number of looked after children placed outside of the county are generally unsatisfactory; until very recently the council relied on monitoring by individual social workers, but this is now being extended in the context of corporate monitoring. Plans for a virtual school that will allow the effective tracking and monitoring of the attainment, progress and attendance of all looked after children are being implemented.

84. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well to attend mainstream schools. Since the last inspection of the local education authority in 2003, the council has changed its methodology for funding support for children with additional educational needs. Increased funding is delegated to schools to enable earlier intervention. Schools rate highly the support they receive from the council's Specialist Learning Support Team.

### **Making a positive contribution**

85. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good.** Children and young people are given good support to develop socially and emotionally. A wide range of programmes and activities are used effectively to raise awareness of personal responsibility and sense of community. There is good support for most children and young people to manage changes and respond to challenges in their lives, and some good examples of targeted initiatives for some vulnerable groups, including teenage parents and looked after children. Work with children is exemplary. Cambridgeshire has a play strategy that will be reviewed in the year ahead. Most parents report positively about programmes they have been involved in that support them to maintain or re-establish good relationships with their children. The focus on positive contribution is being appropriately incorporated into family support strategies.

86. The voluntary sector is used well to provide a range of services to help children, young people and their parents or carers, to cope with traumatic events and major changes in their lives as well as to raise their aspirations. However, some uncertainty exists amongst some voluntary groups about future funding as external sources of funding come to an end. A wide range of partners, including the police, youth service, youth offending service, health and social care services, support programmes through schools that directly tackle drug, alcohol and substance misuse as well as issues associated with sexual health and personal safety.

87. The involvement of children and young people in decision-making is effective, with some good examples of how children and young people have been positively engaged in the development of services in the county. Some young people have indicated that they did not always receive feedback on their ideas and proposals and that, in the field of community regeneration, they felt they had more to contribute. They also felt that, where there had been feedback, actions that ensued were sometimes tardy. The CYPP was produced in full consultation with children and young people and modified in the light of their involvement. Links between children and young people's consultation processes and the decision-making responsibilities of elected members is strengthening. There are several youth fora, including a Youth Parliament and school councils that bring children and young people together in the county. In addition to being used as a sounding board for developments in provision, its members contribute effectively and sensitively to their priority issues. The question of transport in the county and the problems of accessing services from rural areas have been consistently raised by young people themselves and this is an issue where they feel they need the help of the council and partners.

88. The youth service is providing good support to vulnerable groups but, as a comparatively small service, it is stretched. There is a clear focus on early identification and intervention to prevent anti-social behaviour. The high visibility of police community support officers has been identified by young people and some schools as being important in encouraging positive behaviour, as are close contacts between the police and individual schools. There is a wide range of cultural, sporting and study activities out of school hours that are successfully used to engage young people in positive activities and divert them from either being involved in, or the victims of, crime. However, inadequate transport systems and travel costs are sometimes barriers to access these activities.

89. Changes over the last year in the YOS have secured greater clarity of direction and are leading to well-targeted action being taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people. A range of agencies have helped identify those most likely to be at risk to ensure that projects remain suitably targeted on the areas of greatest need. The YOS has good and close contact with the police and this has enabled both to increase the focus of their work on the impact of crime on victims. Similarly, the

integrated Connexions provision contributes well to the mix of services aimed at reducing offending and actively promoting positive contribution.

90. Looked after children in Cambridgeshire are consulted on a range of issues and participation rates in reviews are relatively high. Whilst participation and consultation work is increasing across the county and can show impact, further work is required to ensure that the children's rights component of this work is suitably emphasised, particularly for groups of children who for reasons of circumstance may be more vulnerable. The county does not employ a children's rights officer or make provision in this regard for children placed out of the county. Some children and young people commented that they were unclear about how to make complaints or representations about the services they receive and there is scope to improve communication in this respect. Where children have been able to make representations, the systems are good, with careful and thorough analysis of the issues involved.

91. There is growing awareness in Cambridgeshire of the importance of enabling children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make a positive contribution, with an acknowledgement that services to support this key objective are variable. This is an area for planned work and there are some examples of initiatives to raise awareness and participation levels. The county is in the process of revising its transitions strategy to be fully implemented during 2007.

92. Young carers support groups are well organised and supported by key voluntary partners in the county, including Centre 33, Crossroads and Ormiston Trust. The young carers themselves spoke very highly about these services and the importance to them in helping them care for relatives. A degree of uncertainty exists in some voluntary groups regarding ongoing support and funding.

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

93. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good.** Arrangements to support families to achieve economic well-being are also good. Access to childcare is good, with new facilities in several areas. The children's information service is effective in supporting families and has been awarded the Partners in Excellence award. More employers are offering childcare at work following relevant promotional events. New children's centres incorporate Job Centre advice. Adult and community learning and the Train to Gain schemes provide good opportunities for low-skilled adults to improve their employability.

94. Provision in Cambridgeshire for 14-19 year olds is increasingly well coordinated; the council has built effectively on long established sub-regional partnerships between schools and colleges. Recently appointed 14-19 coordinators in the council are moving the strategy forward after a slow start. There has been a sharp increase in activity supported by good resources to improve quality and outcomes. Providers are collaborating closely to make the

best use of specialist knowledge and to standardise procedures and protocols. Ambitious targets to meet regional workforce development priorities are supported by capacity building. For instance, the LSC, colleges and schools are working closely with the construction sector skills council to provide training and experience to school teachers to disseminate parts of the new construction specialist diploma. A range of innovative schemes are developing enterprise skills in young people. One school, for example, leases pupils' paintings to local companies. However, independent work-based learning providers are insufficiently involved in the planning and coordination of provision for 14-19 year olds.

95. The services provided under the umbrella of Connexions provide highly effective support to young people; by integrating the service fully into the council's children's services, communication and information sharing has substantially improved. Additionally, by broadening its role in locality teams, it has been possible to facilitate earlier forms of intervention. The very successful actions to reduce the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training are supported by more sophisticated use of data to manage performance and analyse need. Young people have a high opinion of the services they now receive. A good range of printed and electronic information is available to help them choose a career. All young people have access to interviews with Connexions while at school, and a process gives each an individual transition plan starting in year 9 to encourage progression into 16+ transition.

96. There are good improvements to the physical and social environment in the most disadvantaged areas. Additionally, well-established partnerships are maturing and sharing ideas to produce innovative approaches to empower residents and community groups to make sustainable changes. Many improvements to run-down estates are well designed to meet the needs of families and communities. The rural pathfinder has attracted much needed investment into Fenland to improve educational prospects and aspiration. Residents have an improved perception of life and raised confidence. Although young people are consulted about regeneration, they feel that they receive insufficient feedback about why decisions are made and how their ideas have been considered.

97. Good partnership working in the county is reducing homelessness and improving access to suitable housing for young people and families. However, one of the cases tracked during this review showed poor co-ordination between the county council and the district council in providing safe alternative accommodation for a mother and her children. The population of the county is increasing sharply, with an associated increase in the average property prices. In two areas, the new joint allocation panel includes the voluntary sector and collaboratively plans to assess and meet local need. A county-wide strategy for young homeless people is being developed and a client-centred approach is increasingly in place. Partners put a high priority on regenerating housing in disadvantaged areas and providing more affordable housing. The Decent

Homes Standard is on target to be fully met by 2010. Many new homes are being built and two new Foyers providing accommodation and training advice for young people between the ages of 16 and 25 have recently been opened. Preventative measures and collaborative projects have been successful in helping families and young people to get accommodation and to stay in it. Mediation and mentoring are well used to avert homelessness.

98. Although stays and numbers in temporary accommodation are reducing sharply, they are still too high. There are crash beds available in the county, but the supply remains insufficient for overall need. Residents raised many issues about the co-ordination and appropriateness of housing for homeless young people and families. There are particular difficulties for vulnerable groups, such as ex-offenders and children in need. Families are sometimes placed in remote housing where transport and access problems make it more difficult to continue education. In exceptional circumstances, the council will provide transport assistance. New Foyer and hostel accommodation is increasing the flexibility of arrangements for emergency accommodation, but temporary accommodation is sometimes unsuitable or in need of refurbishment. There are appropriate arrangements for teenage parents, although some find the system overly slow and cumbersome. Young people with a disability find it especially difficult to get accommodation suited to their needs.

99. Improvements in the county to effective multi-agency working have led to increasing support for young people leaving care and for young people with disabilities. This remains an area for development, but progress is being made. New collaborative arrangements are enabling the transition process to be initiated at an earlier stage. Individual plans for each young person developed by all relevant agencies are starting in year 9 for some young people. For older young people who have already left care, service co-ordination by the relevant agencies is improving. Some variation still exists across the county as a whole. A new early needs identification process ensures appropriate support into learning for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A 14-25 Transitions Team is being established to ensure an effective relationship between adult and children's services. The innovative In-Control pilot tailors a package of support to the young person's wishes and needs using the adult budget. There are strong partnership links with special schools through locality and area working. All young people who are subjects of statements of special educational needs have transition plans. The multi-agency teams have also identified those who may become vulnerable adults, and they too have transition plans. The proactive approach emphasises prevention and borderline cases receive appropriate attention. Advocacy agencies such as Speaking Up are effective in allowing young people to contribute to decision-making, but the funding of their work is dependent on the schools' own ability to pay. Colleges and providers are sometimes not set up to accommodate their needs. Participation by care leavers remains low.

100. A high proportion of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are in education, employment or training and the innovative Improving Choices programme is a good example of a productive partnership between the schools, the colleges and the social employers. There is a satisfactory range of courses for them in adult and community learning, but funding criteria sometimes restrict their ability to take up places. There is insufficient suitable supported college provision for older students with disabilities.

### Service management

101. **The management of services for children and young people is good and the capacity to improve further is good.** Ambitions for Cambridgeshire's children and young people are good. The CYPP for 2006-2009 links well to the *Every Child Matters* outcomes and is ambitious and challenging. The Plan was developed from a comprehensive needs analysis and extensive consultation with children, young people and partners, and this involvement continues. Extensive consultation events focused on the future shape of services, such as 'Dream Dare Do' during June 2004 to January 2005, and built on this work with a themed audit and activities during October 2005. Priority actions and a checklist for success are important plan features and children and young people are engaged in the planning and auditing processes.

102. Ambitions are firmly based on a comprehensive assessment of local needs. Partners use statistical data and qualitative evidence to identify geographical areas and community groups with specific needs. The county-wide needs and gap analysis has been thorough. Partners share a keen understanding of local need and the work required to improve outcomes and to achieve key priorities. There are now high aspirations for those areas of the county where in the past there has been some under-investment in children's services. Ambitions also reflect the diverse nature of the local population and full consideration of diversity informs the partners' ambitions in the CYPP. For example, there are targeted outcomes in achievement, participation, exclusion and bullying for children and young people from the Traveller communities and from Black and minority ethnic and vulnerable groups. The Schools Health Education Unit survey for 2006 shows the percentage of 13 and 15 year olds worried about going to school because of bullying was 15% for 15 year old boys and 35% for 13 year old girls: although this is below the national average, it is still in need of further local attention.

103. The CYPP provides a clear overarching strategic framework for children and young people's services in Cambridgeshire. It is an effective strategic link to other key plans including five district community strategies, the council's corporate plan, the LAA and partnership plans. The three Area Partnership Plans support delivery of the CYPP in addition to reflecting local needs and issues.

104. Prioritisation is good. Services to children and young people are central to two of the three corporate priorities. The CYPSP has established consistent priorities for achieving improved outcomes for children and young people and has identified six key outcomes after extensive consultation and evaluation work aligned to the national agenda for *Every Child Matters*. Outcomes in the plan closely correspond to those described by children and young people as their key aspirations.

105. Partnership working is becoming well established in most parts of the county to achieve joint priorities. However, further work is needed to ensure that the culture of working for integration is fully understood across all agencies in the county and that the delivery of all objectives is fully owned. The majority of priorities and targets in the CYPP and the LAA are on course to be achieved by agreed dates. For the 10% of the priorities at significant risk of not being achieved, responsible partners are taking corrective action to improve performance. Actions include making management information more relevant, for example through the use of more appropriate proxy indicators, regular exception reporting, and action reporting on steps being taken to address specific issues.

106. Current capacity is adequate and capacity to improve is good. Leadership is strong and effective. The Lead Councillor and two groups of key councillors - portfolio holders and 'spokes' (a group of councillors from each political party) provide an effective voice for children and young people at partnership and council level. The partnership board, chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive and made up of senior officers from partner organisations, works well. The lead member for children's services chairs the CYPSP steering group, made up of elected members and non-executive partner organisations. The Deputy Chief Executive/Director for Children's Services provides clear and decisive professional leadership, and has established a very effective management team. The case tracking exercise showed that management at a local level is evolving and that further work is needed to strengthen accountabilities. Councillors and managers are working in concert to achieve improved outcomes for the children and young people of Cambridgeshire. There is effective all-party commitment to achieving good services for children and young people, and this co-operation has enabled the effective reorganisation of the whole council to assure the delivery of integrated services and that resources are available to meet priorities.

107. Access to services is continuing to strengthen. Cambridgeshire has five phase one children centre's in Cambridge, Wisbech, Histon, Huntingdon and North Cambridge and plans to implement 22 additional centres. The focus for future developments will be the areas of the county with greatest need. Although the CYPSP does not have a formal arrangement described as a Children's Trust, it is developing multi-agency arrangements in the 14 localities. Three area directorates and 14 locality teams, based around secondary school and clusters of primary schools, provide an effective multi-disciplinary operation to deliver preventive services for children and young people. Capacity to deliver

integrated services for children and young people is good. Family support services are also moving to the area level to support social workers directly in schools and for early years. Three geographically based area partnerships support the CYPSP and these mirror the three area directorates, which deliver services.

108. Qualified social work capacity is around 11% below the agreed establishment level. Although this figure is subject to review as integrated working releases capacity elsewhere in the system, particular and current pressure points remain in the county and this pressure is affected by increased referral rates. Recent plans to address this problem are included in 'Better Together', the children's workforce planning and development strategy 2006-2009 and a thoughtful recruitment and retention strategy for 2006-2009. The Total Reward model aims to provide incentives and recognition, job satisfaction, training and support for workers rather than one-off pay increases. To date, 30 members of staff have been recruited to support fostering activities and 14 graduate trainees have been appointed. Unqualified social workers are employed to good effect and are undertaking effective work. There are concerns about the complexity of some work carried out by unqualified staff and how this work is routinely overseen and monitored by managers. The cost of agency staff, at £483,612 in 2005/06, is comparatively high.

109. The allocation of resources to priorities is adequate. The budget for 2006/07 was based on the previous organisational structure and was reconfigured to match the new structure early in the financial year. This caused some budgetary uncertainty at that time. In addition, the budget was based on the use of reserves and was not sustainable. It was felt that it was safer to use one-off funding in 2006/07 rather than to seek savings whilst also re-structuring. The most recent budget is now robustly aligned with the strategy for the three areas. However, the financial pressure forecast for 2007/08 means there is little latitude for growth. This combined with major deficits in the health economy in the county points to significant challenges ahead in achieving all the objectives in the CYPP on time. The sustainability of project funding is also a concern as, for example, lottery funding expires. A degree of uncertainty exists in some voluntary groups regarding ongoing support and funding. Current issues include financial pressures and overspend on some trading services, such as the music agency and the schools library service, the high cost of home to school transport and out of authority placements. Plans are in place to address these concerns.

110. Value for money is good. The council is the lowest spending council in the country and budgets for the OCYPS are low overall in comparison to similar areas achieving the same standards for children and families. The council has a good focus on value for money and the OCYPS demonstrates a good awareness of costs and pressures. For example, home to school transport costs are high, but are targeted for significant reductions during 2007/08. Participation in a benchmarking project for looked after children is providing the council with useful comparative placement data.



111. The area is in the process of formulating and implementing a joint commissioning strategy with the aim of challenging the use of resources, developing suitable resources for children in the county and jointly establishing contracts for a range of local services. Pooled budgets are planned to be an element of the commissioning work; currently there are joint funding arrangements in place, but no formal pooled budget arrangements under Section 31 partnerships.

112. The council's approach to performance management is becoming more rigorous and is managed within a corporate framework. The top 30 score card shows councillors and managers how the corporate body is performing and the service level systems below this give the more detailed information. However, further developments are needed to integrate performance management methodology in the context of joint services and locality working and to in-build better quality control. The OCYPS has a quality assurance strategy that details how performance management works within the service and this feeds into the corporate system. Quarterly reporting on progress against CYPP and LAA targets focus attention on service level actions, with narrative commentary about what is happening to achieve targets. Below this, at specific officer level, systems and tools to provide information for managers are at different stages of consistency and effectiveness. The council is aware of this and has plans in place to address the issues. Joint auditing arrangements to examine the quality of case practice are insufficiently developed.

113. Children and young people contribute effectively to performance management. Just Us groups of young people aged 7-20 have participated in producing the looked after children's manual and in 'Question Time' for senior managers and councillors. Young people, including those involved in the Youth Parliament, assist in the selection and recruitment of staff. Scrutiny is good and provides robust challenge to services. All-party support for children's services is good and leads to sensible discussions regarding the services, priorities for action and the planned use of resources. The OCYPS has a robust and extensive database of performance data. Further work is developing to turn this into more useful management information, as currently it does not feed automatically into corporate and partnership systems. Partners use a range of different systems and tools for reporting and managing performance for the CYPP and for the LAA.

114. Input of information and accuracy are current managerial concerns. Information is provided in different formats both electronically and manually and there are inconsistent uses of the systems by staff. The SWIFT system used for social care is not fully capable of monitoring and reporting on all aspects, for example, the health of looked after children and children in need referrals. This information and data are captured separately on spreadsheets. As an interim measure, over the next 12-18 months, the OCYPS plans to develop more fully its use of SWIFT. Meanwhile, the council is tendering for a single children's information system. This will cover social care, education, youth service, connexions and youth offending functions and will replace all

existing OCYPS operational systems including SWIFT. As a result, all the records on children and young people will be held on one system and can be made available to all relevant staff. The council is also procuring an electronic social care system that will enable all social care records to be stored electronically. This system will interface with the single children's system and will also provide the platform for a corporate electronic records and document management system.

115. Understanding of performance management across the partnership is also developing. Partners have used exception reporting and are beginning to develop more sophisticated systems to generate more effective management information, for example, a recent request for different views of information about bullying. Key outcomes each have performance indicators and detailed priority actions, which, in turn, are supported by performance indicators, targets and measures, and named lead partners. These provide the framework to deliver the outcomes. However, some services do not yet have an established performance baseline and target, making progress in these areas hard to judge.

116. Information sharing processes are in need of further refinement and this is recognised by partners. The partnership does not currently have a single assessment and recording system in place. A recently introduced resource pack provides revised guidance for staff about information sharing. The partnership is developing and implementing its information sharing index, with a multi-agency project board. The partnership is consulting on and developing a formal model of staged intervention for children and young people. The model aims to provide a multi-agency framework to assess and understand, then meet, a child's needs systematically and proportionately, and in more integrated ways.

117. The capacity to improve is good. There is considerable momentum to continue to shape integrated services and to ensure equity of service delivery across Cambridgeshire for children and families. The joint commissioning strategy and the quality assurance strategy are planned to ensure that standards and consistency are achieved.

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

1. Overall, the council's children's services are good but there are areas, particularly in social care, that need further development and greater consistency of practice to ensure that the most vulnerable children and young people are provided with consistently reliable services to meet their needs. The formation of the OCYPS, alongside effective political and professional leadership, is providing balanced service provision for most children and young people and an increasingly clear focus on the needs of the more vulnerable groups. Although there are significant budget pressures and human resource gaps in some services, capacity for improvement is good.

2. Health services for children and young people are adequate, particularly in meeting national health targets. Partnership working between health services and the council is sound, with increasing examples of integrated working. In the recent past, health services have undergone considerable change and high turnover of chief executives. The amalgamation of the PCTs into a single organisation in October 2006 was welcomed and now provides greater scope to provide integrated services. This is being enhanced through planned developments in joint commissioning.

3. Children and young people most at risk of harm are adequately protected through collaborative arrangements and procedures. Further work is required to ensure greater consistency of approach in respect of children and young people who are in need, particularly where chronic neglect and emotional harm are continuing features of their lives. In this context, the LSCB is required to review page 10 of the inter-agency procedures in order to achieve greater clarity on thresholds. All child protection cases are allocated to qualified social workers who receive comprehensive training and good supervision. Support for looked after children is generally good, but services for some care leavers is inconsistent, and there are significant challenges in reducing the comparatively high number of children placed out of county. Services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are being strengthened and plans are being formulated to improve the range of services available, including respite care provision and transitional arrangements.

4. Education services are good, with high attainment and achievement levels. A good range of education and specialist support is provided for looked after children, children and young people from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities. Children who are educated other than at school do not always receive sufficient education and this is an area for further development. The education welfare service, psychology services, CAMHS and the youth service collaborate well to support vulnerable groups. Access to leisure and recreational activities is generally good, but there are restrictions in rural areas because of transport problems and cost.

5. Children and young people are encouraged to make a positive contribution to their schools and local communities. Youth offending rates remain low and children and young people in the county are less likely to become the victims of crime. There is good and active working between the YOS and other services, although there is further scope to ensure the needs of minority groups are fully met. A good range of services and opportunities exist to facilitate participation and consultation, including an active Youth Parliament. There is scope to extend children's rights to ensure children who are placed outside the county and other vulnerable groups have better access to advocates or independent visitors and the complaints system. Services to young carers are good with excellent support from voluntary providers. However, the providers of services felt that local funding was uncertain and this was affecting their capacity to plan.

6. Local services to help children and young people achieve economic well-being and support to families are good. Access to childcare is good with new facilities in several areas. New children's centres incorporate Job Centre advice. Employer events promote childcare at work. Adult and community learning and the Train to Gain schemes provide good opportunities for low skilled adults to improve their employability. However, access to learning in rural areas is more difficult because of transport difficulties. Provision for 14-19 year olds is increasingly well co-ordinated: ambitious targets to meet regional workforce development priorities are supported by capacity building. Connexions provide highly effective support to young people. Actions to reduce the numbers who are not in education, employment or training have proven to be very successful.