

Joint area review

Bracknell Forest Children's Services Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

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

Age group: All

Published: 19 February 2008

Reference no: 867



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Introduction

1. This report assesses the contribution of local services in ensuring that children and young people:
 - at risk, or requiring safeguarding are effectively cared for
 - who are looked after achieve the best possible outcomes
 - with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve the best possible outcomes.
2. The following investigations were also carried out:
 - impact of the support of joint services to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
 - quality of provision and the impact on outcomes for young people post-16.

Context

3. Bracknell Forest covers 109 sq km of central Berkshire and includes the former new town of Bracknell, along with Crowthorne, Sandhurst and a number of smaller villages and settlements. The north and east of the borough form part of the Metropolitan Green Belt whilst land to the south is internationally important for nature conservation.
4. The borough's population is 112,200 (2006 estimate) and is growing twice as fast as the average for the South East region. The population is relatively young compared to the national average. There are approximately 30,000 children and young people aged 0–19 resident in Bracknell Forest, representing 27% of the total population and around 14,500 pupils on roll in Bracknell Forest primary and secondary schools.
5. The 2001 Census showed that 90.6% of the population is White British. The Black and minority ethnic population was 5.9%. However, the population is known to have changed rapidly since 2001 and the number of school pupils from Black and minority ethnic groups has grown from 6.1% to 12.7% in 2007.
6. Bracknell Forest is generally affluent, being ranked 319 out of 354 on the Index of Multiple Deprivation in 2004 and free school meals eligibility is low at only 6.7%. These headline figures mask significant pockets of deprivation. For instance, three Super Output Areas are in the most deprived 20% in the country in relation to education, skills and training.
7. Pre-16 education provision comprises 52 early years providers; six children's centres; 15 maintained nursery schools; 30 primary schools; six secondary schools; a special school and a pupil referral unit.

8. Post-16 education and training is provided in Bracknell and Wokingham College; six secondary schools with sixth forms; one post-16 extended education facility at the special school and one work-based training provider, namely Bracknell and Wokingham College. Adult and community learning including family learning are provided by the Lifelong Learning Team.

9. In October 2006, the Primary Care Trust, that had the same boundaries as Bracknell Forest Council, transferred its responsibilities to the newly formed Berkshire East Primary Care Trust covering the wider area of Bracknell Forest, Windsor and Maidenhead and Slough. Acute hospital services are provided by a number of hospitals within a 20-mile radius, including the Royal Berkshire Hospital, Frimley Park Hospital, Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospital.

10. Mental health services are provided by Berkshire Healthcare NHS Trust. At a local level comprehensive CAMHS are delivered through a multi-agency range of partners including Berkshire East Primary Care Trust, the council's Education, Children's Services and Libraries Directorate and the voluntary and community sector organisations.

11. Children's social care services are provided through 74 registered foster carers; one short break unit for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; the Wick Hill Bracknell Family Centre; social teams covering those under 11 years and those above this age; Disabled Children's Team; children and families Duty and Assessment Team, Family Placement Team, Family and Adolescent Support Team (FAST) and After Care Team (ACT)).

12. Youth offending services are provided by Bracknell Forest Youth Offending Service. There are no young offender institutions in the area.

Main findings

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

- The contribution of local services to providing a safe environment and improving outcomes for children and young people in need of safeguarding is good. Key services are provided promptly when needs are identified and are managed well overall, although there are some inconsistencies. There is an effective Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and a good range of family support is available. Children and young people appear safe.
- Services for looked after children are good. There is a strong emphasis on matching resources to individual children and young people's needs and recognition of the need to improve the range of foster care placements available. More needs to be done to ensure that care leavers gain employment or continue in education and training and ensure that the views of more children in care are taken into account when planning future service requirements.

- Partnerships work well together to provide good services to improve the outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although parents and carers do not always know what is on offer. The needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have a high priority in strategic planning.
- The quality of CAMHS is good. Some excellent partnership arrangements provide early intervention and promote emotional well-being in the community. There is adequate, and improving, access to a suitable range of specialist services. With recent changes in health service organisation the management of information to assess improvement in outcomes is not yet fully developed.
- The quality of provision for education and training post-16 is adequate. Collaborative working has increased the variety of provision recently, although access and range still do not meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable groups of young people in the area. The achievements of young people from 16 to 19 years of age have improved and are adequate overall.
- The quality of youth work in Bracknell Forest is good; young people enjoy taking part and those that participate gain a fair range of skills from capable staff.
- The management of children's services is good. Increasing commitment to partnerships and integrated working, together with a strong focus on the important priorities have produced good results in many key areas. The council and its partners recognise there is more to do to gather the views of some groups of children and young people, collate information and respond to changing needs in the population. Ambitious leadership, good financial and workforce management provide good capacity to improve outcomes further.

Grades

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

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

Recommendations

For immediate action

The local partnership should:

- ensure that an appropriate way is found to successfully disseminate the findings of this report to children and young people in the area
- ensure consistent management oversight and analysis of social care cases.

For action over the next six months

The local partnership should:

- improve multi-agency thresholds for intervention where concerns build up over time, to ensure that a clear analysis of past, and present, concerns enable the identification of needs and that there is a consistent approach to intervention
- implement plans to increase the number of foster care placements for adolescents, for children with complex needs and for some Black and minority ethnic groups
- improve young people's input to the corporate parenting panel
- ensure all parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive information about services that are available to them
- strengthen post-16 arrangements by:

- improving the quality of underperforming sixth forms
- increasing the range and availability of post-16 education and training provision to meet the needs of the most vulnerable young people living in Bracknell Forest including looked after children
- developing the electronic interactive prospectus.
- update the needs analysis and coordination of services for:
 - children and young people from Black and minority ethnic groups, their parents and carers
 - disadvantaged communities and areas.

Equality and diversity

14. Bracknell Forest is currently experiencing significant changes in the ethnic diversity of the area. This is particularly the case among the population of 0–19 year olds. As an illustration, the percentage of Black and minority ethnic school age children rose by 3% in the last year. Some 30 different first languages are currently spoken in Bracknell Forest schools. The diversity of the area is increasing rapidly with communities of Nepali and Filipino families established in parts of the borough and a growing number of Polish and enlarged European Union, non-British White families moving to the area. These changes have, in practice, presented significant challenges for collecting data to help understand what children and young people require. In particular, recording and collating ethnic and religious information of service users has not been rigorous in some council, health or commissioned services.

15. Specific programmes, and events, are well tailored to the needs of known groups and the embedded inclusive practice and outreach work of youth services, voluntary settings, extended schools and particularly children's centres ensures that all users are well served. There is particularly exciting community cohesion and human rights practice in the large number of local schools that have adopted the UNICEF Rights Respecting Agenda, with very good impact on behaviour and personal development. Anti-bullying work has a high profile; policies are usefully linked to anti-racist and anti-homophobia policies. As the borough is relatively small, not all the needs of all children in care or those with severe and/or complex needs are met locally, although good resources, such as minority ethnic foster carers and residential special schools, are secured outside the area.

Safeguarding



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

| Important strengths | Important weaknesses |
|--|--|
| <p>Good performance against safeguarding indicators.</p> <p>Safe environment provided in a range of settings.</p> <p>Robust child protection conference processes.</p> <p>All children with protection plans have an allocated social worker.</p> <p>Effective LSCB.</p> <p>Good availability of safeguarding training.</p> <p>Good range of family support services.</p> <p>Prompt attention to children and young people's concerns about bullying.</p> <p>Good domestic abuse practice.</p> | <p>Some inconsistency of management oversight of safeguarding practice.</p> <p>Some inconsistency of applying multi-agency thresholds, particularly where concerns change or build up over time.</p> |

17. Provision of safeguarding information to children, young people and their families is good and embedded in the practice of many services. Parents are well informed about how to keep their children safe with guidance on protection from abuse and accidents readily available through the Children's Information Service, Family Centre, and the DAT. There is strong emphasis on assisting parents and carers in developing their parenting skills across a range of services, evident in the low numbers of referrals to social care services. Performance in reducing teenage pregnancy is excellent, with a 40.7% reduction rate between 1998 and 2005. Advice on sexual health is available to young people in a range of settings. Efforts to provide safe settings and environments are highly effective. Targets to reduce the number of children killed, or seriously injured, through road traffic accidents have been exceeded, and inspections of schools, early years and youth settings show good performance in meeting health and safety and other safeguarding requirements.

18. The range of family support services is wide, and social workers and other professionals make good use of such services to improve outcomes for children and their families. Group work, courses and individual support are provided through the Bracknell Forest Family Centre and community organisations; plans for extended services and children's centres will enhance the range and availability of support. Parents and carers are assisted in developing their parenting skills through Webster Stratton parenting programmes, which have been extended to include programmes for the parents of teenagers. The Children's Fund has been well targeted on early intervention and prevention services for 8-13 year olds at risk of offending. The Youth Offending Service manages a Youth Justice Board grant aimed at the reduction of offending and projects include highly regarded parenting support work. Specific support or treatment is offered to families affected by domestic violence or drug and alcohol abuse. Services are also targeted well to divert children and young people from care. Skilled workers focus on safeguarding in the FAST team, which engages directly with families with adolescents in conflict, and the Young People's Accommodation Panel for other vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds, as well as those in care. Close working between social work teams and the legal adviser ensures effective care plans are in place.

19. In response to previous local surveys of children and young people, the council has concentrated resources on anti-bullying work. Good practice in youth work incorporates anti-racist and homophobic harassment principles. A more recently conducted national survey, and the council's own evidence, show concerns still exist and a higher proportion of children feel less safe in school and in travelling to and from school than the national average. The council has taken the concerns seriously, with the secondment of an anti-bullying co-ordinator in post until March 2008 to audit and share good practice and to assist schools and agencies in embedding anti-bullying practice into their core work.

20. There is a good overarching strategy and a clear action plan to reduce domestic violence and minimise the effects of this form of abuse on children, including training and a resource pack for schools. There is a well considered response to domestic violence reports from the children's social care DAT.

21. Implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is progressing adequately towards the government's target date for implementation in April 2008. A pilot, which has been running in the central area of Bracknell Forest for one year, has assisted in improving the co-ordination of a range of support to children and families who have additional needs but do not require social work intervention. A comprehensive programme of training and awareness raising has been provided, but despite this, some settings or practitioners within the pilot area are not yet routinely identifying the need for a CAF and initiating the process.

22. Performance data on safeguarding issues demonstrates that practice is generally good. The low rate of re-referrals and repeat protection plans shows that work with families has achieved sustained improvements. However, where

concerns about particular children in need arise repeatedly over time, service responses by the Duty and Assessment service, or other agencies, are not always consistent. Initial assessments completed within the Duty and Assessment service are highly detailed, and there is a lower rate of completion of core assessments than in similar areas. The consultation service offered by the DAT encourages appropriate referrals, and there is a good working relationship between the DAT and the police Child Abuse Investigation Team.

23. The child protection conference system is robust and management of protection cases is generally good. Attendance at conferences is good, there are carefully written reports from all agencies, and plans are effectively implemented through core groups. Low numbers of children have protection plans compared with the national picture and all have an allocated social worker. There is good regular supervision and a hands-on approach by managers which is modelled through the different management levels. However, the study of the 10 selected cases, and observation of the Duty and Assessment service, including the analysis of many randomly selected cases, showed a very small number of instances where management oversight lacked rigour, indicating some inconsistency of management practice.

24. There is a good range of training available, which is greatly valued by staff. However, as not all services and agencies monitor the uptake of child protection training systematically, some workers have not received an appropriate level of child protection training for their roles or responsibilities. Encouragement to raise the standards of child protection training for childminders and other pre-school settings is positive. The training needs of middle managers are well supported through accredited management training, and the use of action learning sets. Workforce planning has been effective in increasing the recruitment of social workers through improved pay and conditions, with a high proportion of permanent social work staff now in place.

25. The LSCB has made a good impact and has facilitated improved accountability and ownership of safeguarding issues across agencies. The Quality Standards and Case Review sub-group is assisting improvements in practice through targeted audits, and a multi-agency draft performance framework has been produced. The recently appointed business manager has begun to make an impact on taking forward priorities within the established business plan and other priority areas. The LSCB supplies an accessible version of child protection procedures to all relevant staff in a pocket-sized *Pink handbook*. The Children and Young People's Plan 2007 update shows that progress has been made across a wide range of issues relating to safeguarding. A complex serious case review has been undertaken in a thorough way, with clear learning points identified, and actions implemented by a range of agencies.

26. Multi-agency public protection arrangements appear sound, with appropriate and regular attendance from children's services and health representatives and good information sharing.

27. Safeguarding in recruitment is a priority issue for the LSCB and there is work in progress to ensure a safe approach across all sectors, with examples of practice improvements made as a result. Human Resources services in the Education, Children's Services and Libraries Directorate have recently improved the rigour of safeguarding procedures in recruitment. Previous risk assessments have been reviewed and policies that omitted vital vetting checks for some categories of staff have been updated, the required checks have been put in place and national guidelines are now met. Although practice in some commissioned voluntary organisations is already seen as exemplary, more is being done to ensure that practice is consistent across all commissioned services.

Looked after children and young people



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

| Important strengths | Important weaknesses |
|---|--|
| <p>Looked After Children Education Service.</p> <p>Recruitment and retention strategy for carers.</p> <p>Range and take-up of training for carers.</p> <p>High quality focused work by social workers through individual and group work with young people.</p> <p>The quality of emotional support and accommodation for care leavers.</p> <p>Looked after children do well at school.</p> <p>Permanency planning is well embedded in practice and kinship care is promoted well.</p> | <p>Insufficient clinical psychologist support to foster carers.</p> <p>Young people insufficiently involved in the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel.</p> <p>High number of care leavers are not in education, employment and training.</p> |

29. Looked after children are given a high priority in the Children and Young People's Plan and services for them receive good financial support. The numbers of looked after children in Bracknell Forest are low in comparison with similar authorities with higher proportions having learning difficulties and/or

disabilities than the national average. The ratio of looked after children, at 29.1 per 10,000 of the population, is almost half the national average. A higher than average percentage, 27.3%, are placed in residential care, mostly in weekly or full-time boarding schools; this is in order to meet both their education and care needs. A comparatively low 64.4% are placed in foster care and a significant number are placed outside the borough (37.5%), which presents difficulties for some families in maintaining meaningful contact.

30. Where possible, there is effective use of placements with friends and family members as an alternative to care, with 24 children supported through residence allowances and special guardianship orders. However, all young people who are funded by social care in boarding placements are considered to be looked after; in some instances this can undermine the autonomy and decision-making role of parents, but complies with past Social Services Inspectorate guidance. The Independent Reviewing Officer has drawn attention to the need to review this policy.

31. The quality of assessment of young people's needs, planning and effective partnership working is contributing to good outcomes for children. An ambitious recruitment and retention strategy for foster carers has resulted in more carer assessments, although the number of placements is not yet increasing. There is high take-up of the extensive foster carer training programme designed to improve skills and retain foster carers. Stability in the longer term is comparatively low but improving slightly with the increased social work support available. Where children cannot be matched with local carers, particularly those from Black and minority ethnic groups, or for those with complex needs, placements are sought from neighbouring authorities and independent providers. Joint work is in progress with another borough to provide a better commissioning framework for these arrangements. A recent review of residential care placements concluded that because of the small size and limited resources of the borough it will never be able to provide the range of very specialist provision for all children. A strategy has now been put in place and early indications are that it is preventing a small number of residential placements and postponing a move away from the borough for others.

32. All looked after children have an allocated social worker and a care plan which is regularly reviewed, ensuring active progress on each case. Social workers are able to do in-depth work around life histories and life skills with young people, and case loads are managed to support this. Young people give high value to the less formal opportunities to interact with social workers.

33. Last year, whilst overall performance on the full range of health assessments was good (81%), a significant proportion of young people refused annual health reviews and for many there was inadequate information about immunisations. This is being rigorously followed up with good effect. Access to CAMHS and age appropriate substance misuse services is good for those who remain within the borough. However, it is acknowledged by children's services that there is not enough clinical psychologist support available to foster carers.

34. The excellent Looked after Children Education Service is highly valued by young people. Numbers in each year group are small and a high percentage has learning difficulties and/or disabilities, making comparisons difficult from year-to-year and with other areas. Within a small cohort, overall achievement for looked after children is good, as demonstrated for example in this year's GCSE attainment where five out of seven young people achieved five A*–C grades. The number of children in care permanently excluded from school is exceptionally low. Close monitoring and a good admissions process is reducing absence rates, which at 11.8% is well below the national average for looked after children. Education plans are reviewed regularly, and the recent introduction of targets has increased the numbers who participate in activity outside school from 43% to a very good 79%.

35. The authority is committed to promoting the participation of looked after children and young people in planning services that affect them. This is evidenced in encouraging young people to chair their own reviews, the involvement of young people in staff recruitment and the comments from a number of young people that felt their views were heard, listened to and often acted on. However, only 78% of young people, compared with 87% nationally, participated in their reviews last year. The consultation groups run by the participation officer are only just being coordinated into an agreed work programme and young people do not yet have a formal mechanism to contribute to the work of the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel. There are currently no regular meetings between councillors and groups of looked after children.

36. Good emotional and financial support is offered by the After Care Team, which is highly valued by young people. There is a good range of accommodation available to care leavers who stay in the borough. However, other outcomes are not consistently good. Although it must be stressed that the numbers of young people involved were very small and change of circumstances or action by one or two care leavers greatly affects the proportions for given measures, at the time of the review one in seven care leavers were in custody and half were not in education, training or employment. There are effective processes in place to assist a smooth transfer for those young people who will need adult care services which are highly regarded by the young people.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Inadequate



Adequate



Good

Outstanding



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

| Major strengths | Important weaknesses |
|---|---|
| <p>High profile for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in strategic planning.</p> <p>Effective special educational needs administration and working relationships with schools and other partners.</p> <p>Good progress made in schools by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.</p> <p>Effective multi-disciplinary working, particularly in early years.</p> | <p>Narrow range of local education and training provision for those over the age of 16.</p> <p>Limited dissemination of information about services to some parents.</p> |

38. The council and its partners give high priority in their planning of provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Planning takes account of the historical legacy of education provision when Bracknell Forest became a unitary authority and recent changes in health structures with the formation of the Berkshire East Primary Care Trust (PCT) in October 2006. Because of the small size of the borough and the legacy, much special education provision and all hospital and specialist medical services are outside the borough boundaries. There is a good strategic focus prioritising children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership has a secure understanding of what they do well and less well and how to respond to changing needs. This can be seen, for example, in the increased provision of speech and language services. The good progress identified in the 2006 Annual Performance Assessment has continued, with evidence of better integration of services and more effective partnerships; particularly with commissioned voluntary organisations that provide valuable capacity to support children and young people well in the early years and with the most complex needs. Parents value the family support on offer.

39. Children's needs are effectively identified through well co-ordinated systems and referral procedures that enable assessment in the early stages of development or as needs emerge at a later stage. Comprehensive assessments of development and need are provided at the Margaret Wells-Furby Centre, managed by the national charity NCH, in partnership with a range of professional services, including paediatricians, speech and language therapists and staff from teaching and support services. The Centre is among a range of council and community settings offering early intervention and longer term

family support, especially for those with complex and life-limiting conditions, and access to generic occupational therapy and mental health services, which parents welcome. The case files that were sampled indicate that effective early intervention, underpinned by clear assessment procedures, regular monitoring and a good range of service provision have led to positive outcomes. However, some parents indicate that they do not always know about the range of services on offer and feel they may be missing out on practical help and activities for which they are eligible.

40. The council has a history of good performance in relation to national targets for completion of statutory special educational needs (SEN) assessments and recent figures show outstanding performance in comparison to national averages. A particularly strong feature of the council's SEN service is the priority given to providing appropriate choice for parents or carers and their children in considering the best placement to meet needs. While SEN expenditure is high, it is contained in a well-managed budget. There is a higher than average number of looked after young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are placed outside the borough but these settings are considered best able to meet their complex health, educational and social care needs and good value for money. The SEN service gives high priority to ensuring that children participate well in their annual reviews. The council's special school provides well for a growing number of pupils with a variety of moderate, severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties, reducing the need for some pupils to go out of the borough for school. In addition, specialist units such as those for speech and language, and social and communication difficulties, a dedicated language and literacy centre and the outreach work of the special school and the pupil referral unit enable pupils to be integrated effectively into mainstream classes.

41. Arrangements for safeguarding children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are sound with well tailored training provided to the special school and specialist units. High quality respite and short break care is available to families through the Larchwood respite unit and the Kerith Konnections holiday and Saturday clubs. Parents welcome this provision, although a few expressed the view that it is not sufficient. The council is aware of these concerns and has a specific target to increase the provision of short break care. The council is making increased use of direct payments with uptake increasing from three to 15 families from 2006–07.

42. The vision and policy for inclusion is well embedded in the ethos of Bracknell Forest schools. Strong emphasis is given to initiatives such as the UNICEF Rights Respecting Agenda schools' programme and these underpin the priority given to ensuring that they meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. With skilled support children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities transfer successfully into primary school and on to secondary school in the borough. Very good performance management information allows progress to be closely monitored. Needs are very effectively identified and provided for. Ofsted inspection results show that most pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in

their learning and personal development in Bracknell Forest schools, but the information is not so readily available for the significant proportion of pupils placed outside the borough.

43. Local schools value highly the effectiveness of the council's services to improve outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, placing it in the top quartile nationally for every category. They welcome the balance of challenge and support provided by services such as SEN, the advisory team and educational psychology service. The capacity of services and their prioritisation is aligned closely to levels of need. Schools comment favourably on an improving CAMHS, with good access to general services. Schools speak well of the regular SEN audits which hold them to account, and the administration of SEN procedures. The sharing of good practice and effective partnership between schools provide good professional development opportunities and enable schools to provide more flexible provision, for instance for children with autistic spectrum disorders. The updated SEN resource guide is comprehensive and provides user-friendly information to parents and carers.

44. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities living in the area have access to a range of play, leisure and recreational opportunities specifically to meet their needs, such as the holiday youth schemes run in partnership with Disability Challengers and the Kerith Konnections youth club. Evaluations show that they enjoy the range of experiences provided. The council's play strategy included plans to meet identified needs. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are actively encouraged to contribute to decision-making in their own settings and through their representatives on the youth forum. Some have participated in the development of the Children and Young People's Plan. Groups of young people with learning difficulties have been supported to apply for Youth Opportunities funding to organise, and develop, their own activities. The achievements of some are celebrated through nationally recognised accreditation programmes such as Duke of Edinburgh and Keystone awards. The very good systems in place to enable children and young people to contribute to their annual reviews result in routine participation in decision-making about plans that affect them.

45. Although systems are not as well developed to track the progress that young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make in local sixth forms or the local Bracknell and Wokingham further education college, available data shows that a high proportion of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress well through their courses and good proportions participate in employment, education and training. All young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have transition reviews at age 14+ and these are well attended by services such as Connexions. Transition planning has improved and the recently established Transition Panel has good representation from professionals, ensuring that vulnerable young people's needs are well met. The proportion of young people with disabilities having a transitions plan to adult services is well above the national average. The flexible transition process responds well to the needs and wishes of the young person and is overseen by

a nominated lead professional for each young person. While there is good provision in neighbouring boroughs, often offering the best option very close to home, the range of suitable local provision is limited.

Other issues identified for further investigation

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)

46. **The quality of service provided and the outcomes achieved by children and young people using CAMHS are good.**

| Major strengths | Important weaknesses |
|---|---|
| <p>Good Integrated Care Pathways providing effective multi-agency CAMHS at tiers 1, 2 and 3.</p> <p>Strong awareness of CAMHS by non-specialist professionals.</p> <p>Excellent early intervention work and good access to specialist services for all groups of children and young people, including the most vulnerable, reducing the numbers waiting.</p> <p>Good mental health services for young people who offend.</p> <p>Excellent support for young carers.</p> <p>Effective support during transition from primary to secondary school.</p> <p>A very good range of schemes to help children and young people cope with challenges in their lives.</p> | <p>Performance monitoring of the CAMHS action plan to check progress and identify gaps.</p> |

47. The Children and Young People's Plan, supported by the CAMHS strategy and action plan, demonstrates the clear priority of a multi-agency approach to improving this service locally. Plans take into account the October 2006 changes in health authority structures and realignment of partnership arrangements with Berkshire East PCT and Berkshire Healthcare NHS Trust. Improved and effective leadership of CAMHS has established a good and easily accessible multi-agency service. Support for young offenders and young carers is timely and effective. Early intervention work for children, their families and school staff to manage behaviour and emotional health issues are commendable. The recently introduced integrated care pathways are beginning to support children and young people's emotional, behavioural and mental health needs more effectively.

48. The 2006 annual performance assessment identified a need for the authority to engage all partners in dialogue to resolve the CAMHS service level agreement (SLA) and as soon as practicable to develop a formal SLA between the authority, the newly configured Berkshire East PCT, and the newly organised Berkshire Health Care Trust. Discussions have since taken place between the partners and a comprehensive draft proposal for the future CAMHS specialist services has been considered by the PCT-CAMHS commissioning team. A detailed needs assessment is in progress, with a commitment to involve, and consult, with children from vulnerable groups such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, children in care and Black and minority ethnic communities to inform the future service specification for CAMHS.

49. There has been good consideration of the impact of staff deployment on waiting times. The positioning of CAMHS social workers in key services such as the Family Centre has reduced the need to refer all cases to specific CAMHS services and the number of referrals is falling. With recent changes in the organisation and boundaries of Berkshire East PCT and the Berkshire Healthcare NHS Trust there are no reliable figures over time to identify whether progress has been made on waiting times. The latest data for CAMHS does not yet provide a benchmark against the national four weeks or 26 weeks target.

50. Well established Integrated Care Pathways for children and young people with behavioural needs are in place. A multi-agency group of professionals meets frequently to discuss each case referred and agree collectively the most appropriate line of action. Early years cases are referred to the Margaret Wells-Furby multi-agency setting and follow the same process of assessment and initiation of appropriate support. Awareness of CAMHS by non-specialist professionals has significantly improved in the last year as a result of widely advertised training sessions attended by good numbers of staff to date. Better understanding has contributed further to the reduction in referrals which are now being made to specialist CAMHS provision. The provision of CAMHS for young offenders is prompt. The referral pathway to CAMHS has significantly improved and all young offenders with acute mental health needs are assessed within the nationally agreed target time of five working days.

51. The Audit Commission school survey in 2006 indicated that schools rated the effectiveness of local services in meeting the mental health needs of children and young people as very good. Feedback from parents on the support provided to them, and their children, is equally very good. CAMHS provides a 24-hour on-call service where urgent referrals are seen straight away. The least successful area for CAMHS is clinical psychology, which has a long waiting list. Berkshire Healthcare Trust has agreed a short-term solution by recruiting locum psychologists to ease the pressure and reduce the waiting list.

52. CAMHS provision across all four tiers of preventative, community and specialist support is of good quality overall. Partnership with East Berkshire Mind and the Pyramid Trust voluntary organisation in schools has had a particularly strong effect through early identification of children in need of specialist help. The well regarded input from the Behaviour Support Team in

schools has increased the ability of staff to promote mental well-being and refer on when necessary. The Webster Stratton programme at the family centre and the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme are good examples of sharply focused programmes to prevent breakdown in children's relationships and promote coping strategies. In addition, all schools are engaged in the National Healthy Schools Standard programme and 21 have achieved the National Healthy School Standard with emotional well-being at the heart of the standards.

53. CAMHS provision is readily available through CAMHS social workers in social work teams. Performance management data and monitoring of the strategy and action plan are not sufficiently developed to identify gaps for vulnerable groups such as those with learning difficulties or from Black and minority ethnic communities. Support provided to children and their parents during transition from primary to secondary schools is good. Transition arrangements from CAMHS into adult mental health services are currently undertaken on an individual basis but there is no data that allows analysis of the impact of this approach. There is sufficient in-patient provision; services are provided on a dedicated adolescent unit and all under 18s with mental health needs are cared for on an adolescent unit.

54. Among a very good range of measures to support children and young people in facing challenges in their lives, an excellent bereavement crisis management pack has been produced, and distributed, to all schools. Young carers have been identified and are well supported by a weekly respite service that currently arranges guidance, practical and social activities for 40 children aged 5–18. This is very good given the size of the local authority. CAMHS, in partnership with the BST, educational psychologist, the NRG youth project, Youthline counselling service and Connexions provide a range of one-to-one support, mentoring, group work and coaching sessions to help children and young people with social skills, bullying and harassment and maintaining positive relationships with others.

Quality of provision and the impact on outcomes for young people post-16

55. **The quality of service provided and the outcomes achieved by young people post-16 are adequate.**

| Major strengths | Important weaknesses |
|---|--|
| <p>Improved leadership of the 14–19 partnership.</p> <p>High achievement of Level 3 qualifications by age 19.</p> | <p>The lack of an effective post-16 strategy and slow progress to build the range of provision.</p> <p>The quality of some sixth form education.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Good success rates for those taking up apprenticeships.</p> <p>The improving level of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are not in education, employment or training.</p> | <p>The drop out rate from education at age 17.</p> <p>Ineffective prospectus for post-16 provision.</p> |
|--|---|

56. The authority is working closely with its partners to establish a consensus, to achieve its vision of collective responsibility and to improve outcomes for all learners in the area. Current limitations in the post-16 provision are recognised and there is now a strong foundation to improve. The borough is relatively small and, although provision within the borough is limited, much suitable provision is available within reasonable travelling distance.

57. The development of 14–19 planning is now more collaborative, with some effective partnership work to develop flexibility in post-16 provision, for example some shared timetabling and satisfactory numbers of learners transferring between institutions. Partners have worked well to develop good increased flexibility provision in Key Stage 4. However, progress has been slow and an effective 14–19 strategy, based on sound analysis, has yet to be developed. The recent formation of a strong 14–19 partnership, with an independent chair and appropriate plans in place to drive forward the 14–19 agenda, gives a good platform for future developments. Although individual institutions have productive relationships with employers, employer engagement in the 14–19 partnership has yet to be appropriately developed. The new education business partnership, recently enhanced through joining a larger regional partnership which has a good track record and greater capacity, is already establishing better and more useful links with major employers in the area.

58. Progress towards the collective delivery of new 14–19 vocational diplomas has been slow. All four of the original bids were judged unsatisfactory. The partners have agreed to delay further bids until everything is in place to succeed, with good understanding of the stronger collective leadership and management required. Plans to resubmit bids for diplomas now include sharply focussed attention to facilities and workforce for new 14–19 curriculum entitlements.

59. The range of post-16 provision remains limited as identified in the 2006 annual performance assessment. The partnership recognises the need to broaden the vocational offer and Level 1 provision. Opportunities for employment with training are particularly limited for vulnerable young people. However, some suitable additional provision is being commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council. Although no comprehensive audit has been undertaken to assess the adequacy of available provision, the partners have undertaken a study of the post-16 provision in the two schools in the south of the borough. Work is in progress to develop an analysis of young people's preference against actual destination to identify gaps in provision.

60. The number of young people staying in education, employment and training at age 16 is satisfactory and in line with the national average at 87%. However, the drop-out rate for these young people is too high, reducing the proportion of 16–18 year olds in education, employment and training to 75%. The proportion of young people going on to apprenticeships is significantly lower than the national average, although those taking up apprenticeships are much more successful in completing than their peers nationally. The proportion of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities entering work-based learning achieve higher than average and they achieve well. However, data is not collated to analyse the performance of all vulnerable groups in full-time education post-16.

61. The proportion of young people not in education, employment and training is a concern in the area because although figures are slightly below the national average there has been no reduction over the last two years and the proportion is higher than average in the immediately surrounding council areas. There is, however, very good knowledge about almost all young people's education, employment and training status in the area. The level of young people whose situation is unknown is reducing and at less than 3% it is significantly lower than the national average of 6.9%. The level of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are in education, employment and training is lower than the national average but is improving at a faster rate. Although the number of teenage mothers in the area is very small compared with national averages, nearly half of teenage mothers are in education, employment or training, which is significantly higher than the national average. The picture is not as good for the small number of care leavers as only half are engaged in education, employment or training and this is low in comparison with their peers nationally.

62. Collaboration between partners in providing advice and guidance ensures appropriately independent information, advice and guidance for most young people. The formal relationships between Connexions and schools are well managed through detailed service level agreements. Advice and guidance for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Connexions employ a specialist personal advisor for child and adolescent mental health work and arrange training in mental health for all personal advisors to reduce barriers to learning. It was recognised in the previous annual performance assessment that priority is given to vulnerable groups, and services work successfully to provide individual support packages. Continuing this work, the Connexions service has good data management and closely tracks the progress of all young people, including the vulnerable. Connexions achieved the government requirement of offering training or a learning place to all young people seeking one, although this offer includes many opportunities outside the borough. The local prospectus of 14–19 provision requires significant development. An electronic database is in place but is not comprehensive, and the pilot to include online applications has not been successful. The partnership recognises these limitations and has developed proposals to improve the facility.

63. Achievement and success rates for 16–19 year olds are improving overall. The 2007 schools data on average points score per entry and per student indicates significant improvement although no national data is yet available to offer a comparison. The value-added data for students on Level 2 courses in Bracknell and Wokingham College demonstrates good achievement and the college has been judged good at its recent inspection. Work-based learning success rates have improved and are now better than the national average. The percentage of young people achieving Level 3 by the age of 19 is significantly higher than the national average and rising slightly faster than for statistical neighbours. The proportion of young people who achieve a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 is higher than the national average but lower than that found in neighbouring councils.

64. The quality of sixth form education is variable. Inspection reports judge a third of schools good or better and a third unsatisfactory. Within this picture there is good support to the one school with a notice to improve, which was recently judged to be making satisfactory progress. Value-added information indicates that in some schools young people are achieving well above expectations based on prior attainment, however in a minority of schools too many are underachieving. Ofsted reports judge personal development and economic well-being to be good or better in four sixth forms and satisfactory in two.

Service management



Capacity to improve



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

| Major strengths | Important weaknesses |
|---|---|
| <p>Challenging ambitions with a focus on improvement in priority areas.</p> <p>Quality of service plans.</p> <p>Strong leadership from senior politicians and management.</p> <p>Good recruitment strategies and human resources policies to support workforce planning.</p> <p>Partnership working is good and supports capacity.</p> <p>Sound financial management with good focus on value for money.</p> <p>Good performance management and scrutiny.</p> | <p>Engagement with and needs analysis for children and young people from the Black and minority ethnic communities and other specific disadvantaged groups is not systematic.</p> <p>Underdeveloped corporate parenting arrangements.</p> <p>Performance monitoring in child and adolescent mental health services.</p> |

66. Ambition for children and young people in Bracknell Forest is good. Strategic leadership is effective in delivering the Children and Young People's Plan, the Youth Service and the CAMHS. Partnership working is a strong feature and the management of council children's services is integrated within the Education, Children's Services and Libraries Directorate. Major stakeholders, including voluntary sector organisations, parents and children are actively involved in developing the children's services agenda. There are clear links between the community planning, corporate planning and children and young people's planning which demonstrates this commitment to improving outcomes for all children and young people. The quality of the Children's and Young People's Plan is good and work is well developed towards children's trust arrangements from April 2008.

67. Consultation, and engagement, with children and young people is generally good. The council undertook a wide-ranging needs analysis two years ago which it recognises now needs to be refreshed. This analysis is informing ambitions in some areas of service such as the extension of outreach services from Kennel Lane special school and integrated youth services. The commitment to include all young people is strong but the partnership recognises that there is more to do to systematically make contact with and coordinate and analyse the needs of young people, parents and carers from Black and minority ethnic communities and the most disadvantaged communities and vulnerable groups.

68. Prioritisation is good. Priorities within the Children and Young People's Plan are clear and link well to the views expressed by young people and cover the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes. The plan contains an appropriate

balance between local and national priorities; for example, there is a good focus on preventative services in the plans of the LSCB, the establishment of children's centres and in the delivery of comprehensive CAMHS. The approach to business planning is good, consistent and follows the corporate approach. Links between the Children and Young People's Plan, directorate service plans and individual staff member targets and actions are clear. Resources are well linked to priorities and have been moved to reflect changing priorities, for example behavioural support services have been realigned and the placement of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have been well supported financially with specific focus on meeting individual children's needs. However, there are examples of less positive progress including post-16 provision which lacks an overarching strategy, which means it lacks the focus and priority seen in other areas of service.

69. The quality of plans overall is good, but a few plans are not sufficiently specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART), which means that the effective monitoring, evaluation and accountability in achieving targets is limited. For example, targets set for young people who offend in relation to education, training and employment, are not sufficiently SMART. The council has only achieved Level 2 of the National Equality Standard for Local Government but children's services undertake some highly effective work in looking at the achievement of Black and minority ethnic groups and cohesion matters in the school curriculum. The extended services and children's centres are reaching out to children and carers from Black and minority ethnic communities. Services are advertised in Urdu and a Nepalese teacher is employed who encourages Nepali mothers to develop their skills in helping their children to learn.

70. Capacity is good. The quality of managerial leadership is good. Decision-making is transparent and high quality, regular and informative newsletters are produced for service users and staff. Children's services, alongside the council as a whole, have demonstrated the ability to take difficult decisions in areas such as the reorganisation of home-to-school transport. Despite uncertainties for some staff during the current period of change and for some short-term funding streams there are realistic plans in place and some good examples of succession planning. Projects to implement changes are well managed. Staff are trained in the corporate approach to project management, which has supported the efficient, and effective, delivery of good outcomes. For example, the Hang Out Project for 13 to 24 year olds with moderate learning difficulties has enabled young people to make their own life choices.

71. The quality of political leadership is very good and credibility with schools and other partners is good; valuable working relationships are in place. Communication with partners is effective. The lead councillors for education and children's services are very knowledgeable and passionate about their roles and discharge their statutory responsibilities effectively.

72. Corporate parenting arrangements provide adequate safeguards but are underdeveloped in some areas. For example, there are no regular meetings between councillors and groups of looked after children and the advisory panel is at an early stage of development.

73. Financial management of the Education, Children's Services and Libraries Directorate is good, with successful work undertaken across children's services to bring critical budgets under control over the last two years. Services are currently on target to deliver a balanced budget for 2007–08. Value for money in children's services, and across the partnership, is good with benchmarking, realignment of service provision and contract reviews being deployed effectively. Resources are appropriately moved to meet new priorities. Joint funding is happening in many areas, for example legal expertise is provided by a pan-Berkshire legal service, but the alignment and pooling of budgets internally, and with partners, to integrate services is not yet well developed. Costs of looked after children are higher than all England averages but expenditure is well targeted. The council is pursuing collaborative work to reduce costs for some groups. A consultant has been commissioned to develop a model for regional commissioning of placements for looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Children's services have a successful track record of attracting external funding to support internal capacity. For example, it received £34m from the Building Schools for the Future fund to deliver the Garth Hill College.

74. Children's services currently makes good use of staff and has the people and skills to deliver its priorities. Turnover has decreased over the past year, down from 13.4% in 2006–07 to just under 13% up until 30 September 2007, which is significantly lower than the south east regional average. Sickness absence at 7.04% in 2006–07 is below the national average. There are currently no significant recruitment and retention issues, although the continuity of staffing for voluntary and community sector partners such as the Youthline counselling service is a concern because of the uncertainty of short-term funding. Staff and management training is good as is staff supervision. The workforce strategy is high quality and outcome focused. It is supported by a range of human resource policies. The service is using its workforce strategy to plan for future numbers and skills of its staff and this has already led to recent success in social work recruitment.

75. Performance management within children's services and partnerships is good overall and excellent in statutory education provision. Performance management is consistent with the corporate framework. Performance monitoring is hindered in some cases by limited performance data. For example, performance information in CAMHS is only adequate and has not yet enabled the service to identify gaps in provision.

76. Performance management is still paper-based in some areas and provides basic information to inform decision-making. It is not fully integrated by means of a single IT system. Regular, and systematic, reporting and challenge of performance at all levels takes place. A focused approach to performance

management has led to service improvements in priority areas of educational achievement. The service uses the comprehensive corporate systems for staff appraisal. Managers recognised this as a key feature of the approach to managing individual performance, although in 2007 compliance with the council's procedures for reporting the outcomes to the human resources division was slow in a significant proportion of cases.

77. Scrutiny within Education, Children's Services and Libraries is good and well resourced. Portfolio holders challenge officers on service performance and this is rigorous. In addition, portfolio holders attend monthly departmental management team meetings.

78. The Director, senior managers and partners articulate a strong sense of direction and there is good political and managerial leadership for children's services, which is reflected in the achievement of improvement in some key areas, for example improving trends in Key Stages 2 and 3 performance and the uptake of out-of-school activities for looked after children. There is a realistic view of the challenges the service is facing, in particular the youth service, where the strategy is not clearly articulated and in post-16, where provision is less well developed and the pace of change is too slow to meet emerging challenges. The first year review of the children and young people's plan is robust. There is a continuing commitment to close partnership working, good financial and staff capacity and effective performance management. All of this ensures that the children's services have good capacity to improve further.

Annex A

MOST RECENTLY PUBLISHED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN BRACKNELL FOREST

Bracknell Forest's overall effectiveness is good. Children's services have made an increasingly good contribution to the lives and achievements of its children and young people. The voice of those children and young people is carefully listened to and is utilised effectively in local decision-making processes and in strategic planning. The drive to improve provision for those children and young people in care and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effectively prioritised in the Children and Young People's Plan. The authority is striving to take the needs of a rapidly increasing number of children and young people from families newly arrived from Eastern Europe into account. The contribution of the local authority to the health of children and young people in the borough is outstanding and the children feel safe in the local area with significant preventative measures in place. Pre-school provision is good and achievement in both primary and secondary schools is good overall. The local authority provides effective support and challenge for schools and the only secondary school judged to require a notice to improve has shown appropriate progress. The involvement of many young people in the UNICEF Rights Agenda reflects the local authority's clear commitment to community involvement and ensures that children and young people make a positive contribution as they grow up.

The confidence of officers to work across teams and in close partnership is palpable, which has raised expectations and outcomes for most children and young people. Performance management continues to be highly regarded and as such has been adopted by all Bracknell Forest partnerships as best practice.

The full annual performance assessment can be found at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=284275&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\apa_2007_867.pdf

Annex B: Summary of the Enhanced Youth Inspection report

Main findings

1. The quality of youth work provided by Bracknell Forest is good and the local authority sufficiently secures the provision of youth work. Young people enjoy taking part in activities and are learning a range of social and practical skills. Those who volunteer as young leaders in youth clubs, and those who take part in decision-making bodies, are making an impressive contribution to the community. Young people are well supported by competent, and approachable, youth workers who plan their work effectively. Overall, managers and staff make good use of local networks and partnerships to enrich, and extend, opportunities for learning as well as enhancing support for young people through advice and guidance services. Managers have used their longstanding knowledge of the service and well-established arrangements for monitoring, and assessing, provision very effectively to improve the quality of practice. The local authority has taken a number of positive steps in the direction of integrating youth support services and there is a strong commitment from many partners to work together exemplified in a practical way by the multi-agency NRG project for young people who are not in education, employment or training. There are, however, some shortcomings. The creative use of information and communications technology (ICT) and the promotion of positive race relations do not feature with sufficient consistency in programmes. The service does not yet have a coherent approach to consultation with young people who do not use the service. Weaknesses identified during the inspection in the recording of Criminal Record Bureau clearance and in the guidance issued to staff on child protection were dealt with promptly and effectively. The lack of clarity with regard to service priorities, and the arrangements for achieving integration, is unsettling to staff and managers and there are limitations in the information that is gathered to enable the authority to determine how well it is meeting its ambitions.

Key aspect inspection grades

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

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

Strengths

- Achievement is good. Young people are developing a range of skills and are proud of their achievements.
- Workers plan well in response to the needs of young people using the service.
- Young people from vulnerable and marginalised groups are well served.
- The service has established strong and effective partnerships.
- There are well established and effective procedures for assessing the quality of practice.

Areas for development

- Broaden the content of programmes in youth clubs.
- Clarify the authority's aspirations and priorities for youth work in the context of an integrated service
- Develop the data requirements needed to monitor progress in achieving priorities.
- Consult with young people who do not currently use the service.

Annex C

CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Outcomes for children and young people in Bracknell Forest are good. They are very healthy and benefit from good community support for their mental well-being. Comparatively few children and young people are in need of protection plans or come into care. Those most in need benefit from prompt and effective services. Educational achievement is good up to age 16 but the combined outcomes in education, training and employment for those over 16 are only adequate. The great majority of children and young people behave responsibly; many take-up the wide variety of opportunities to contribute to their schools and communities. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do well, with effective help in moving on within children's services.

2. The management of children's services in Bracknell Forest is good. The senior management team and elected members give very good leadership in expressing the area's strong ambitions for integrated working to improve outcomes. Prioritisation is good and founded well on need, although the council recognises that the intensive analysis commissioned two years ago needs updating in the light of the rapidly changing population. Management and workforce capacity is good, enhanced by innovative recruitment and retention policies for teachers and social workers. Change has been managed well, although progress has been slow in the area of 14 to 19 partnerships. Partners and community sector organisations make an impressive contribution to preventative and family support work. Financial management is effective. Staff supervision is generally effective and purposeful; performance management systems are good and particularly well used in education.

3. The high quality Children's and Young People Plan is clearly aligned to corporate strategy and the Local Area Agreement. A robust first year review of the Children's and Young People Plan drives forward the commitment of the council and its partners. There is good progress towards integrated services with key elements of a Children's Trust due to be in place by the target deadline of April 2008. The council has a strong framework for redirecting resources to areas of need and areas of underperformance. With good capacity, robust financial and performance management systems in place, the council has good capacity to continue to improve.

4. All services and the 100% of schools on the National Healthy Schools programme make an excellent contribution to the physical and mental health of children and young people through emphasis on prevention and healthy lifestyles. Babies are given a good start in life and levels of infant and child mortality are low. Dental health is very good. The authority has been judged as one of the top three local authorities in the country in reducing teenage pregnancy with significantly lower rates than the national average. The health

of looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is supported very well through specialist services and good access to universal provision.

5. Children and young people appear safe. The LSCB directs good multi-agency working through its business plans. This is seen in the good practice regarding domestic violence and bullying, including support to the victims of homophobic and racist bullying. Schools and settings where children are cared for provide a safe environment. Road safety is very good. Child protection plans are well managed. Children in care, including the high proportion who are placed in appropriate settings outside the borough, are skilfully supported. The majority are in stable placements although there is more to do in developing foster care for those with complex needs and for some Black and minority ethnic children.

6. Educational and personal development outcomes are good and most pupils enjoy their school life. Achievement through pre-school and in both primary and secondary schools is good overall. The local authority takes effective action to improve schools. Attendance is good, including that for young people in care. Special educational needs processes are well managed and the Kennel Lane special school outreach services are highly regarded by other schools and parents for their effect on supporting inclusion in mainstream schools. Young people make good progress through involvement in youth work and have access to a good range of leisure facilities.

7. The council and its partners take careful account of the views of all groups, although the participation of some groups of Black and minority ethnic groups and some children in care is underdeveloped. Much effort is made to ensure those receiving services take part in reviews. There are outstandingly positive effects on behaviour and achievement in schools that have embarked on the UNICEF-sponsored Rights Respecting Agenda. Partners work closely together to target anti-social behaviour effectively. The rate of offending is comparatively low for the region and those who offend get satisfactory help.

8. Support for economic well-being is good overall, although over-16s are less well served than younger age groups. High quality childcare is widely available. There is good preparation for working life in secondary schools. Provision for young people with learning difficulties is good. Strategies to improve provision for 14 to 19 year olds are not yet fully taking effect for those over the age of 16. There is still a low range of provision, too little flexibility and too few young people staying in employment, education or training. The comprehensive electronic prospectus is underdeveloped. Information, guidance and housing for vulnerable groups are good and young people are effectively involved in consultation for the regeneration of Bracknell Town Centre.

Annex D

SUMMARY OF JOINT AREA REVIEW AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS

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