

Joint area review

Bolton Children's Services Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

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

1. The Annual Performance Assessment (APA) for Bolton judged the council's children's services as good and its capacity to improve as good.
2. This report assesses the contribution of local services in ensuring that children and young people:
 - at risk or requiring safeguarding are effectively cared for
 - who are looked after achieve the best possible outcomes
 - with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve the best possible outcomes.
3. The following investigations were also carried out:
 - an investigation to evaluate the contribution of the 14–19 strategy, including the curriculum, in improving outcomes
 - an investigation into the effectiveness of strategies to improve community cohesion
 - an investigation into the quality of services provided to improve sexual health outcomes.

Context

4. Bolton is located within the Greater Manchester area in the north-west of England. The population currently is almost 265,000, of which one fifth are aged between 0 and 15 years. Almost 13% are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, the most significant groups being of Indian and Pakistani heritage. Over one third of the population lives in wards that are amongst the most deprived in the country.
5. There are 71 private and three voluntary full day-care early years settings. There are 22 private and one voluntary sessional day-care settings. There are six children's centres, with nine more planned. There are four nursery schools, 98 primary schools, 16 secondary schools, six special schools and 13 pupil referral units.
6. Five secondary schools have sixth forms and there is one sixth form college. There is one college of further education in Bolton. There are 30 work-based training providers.
7. Entry to Employment (E2E) provision is managed by Bolton/Bury Partnership, a local consortium that works closely with the local Learning and Skills Council controlling places with five providers, Bolton Community College

Training Services, Bolton Council, NACRO Bolton, Bolton Rathbones and Bolton Training for Today.

8. Adult and community learning, including family learning, is provided by Bolton Community College under contract from Bolton Council. The council's Adult and Community Learning Manager manages the implementation of the contract.
9. Primary care is provided by Bolton Primary Care Trust (PCT), which is coterminous with the local authority area. The main provider of children's acute services is Bolton Hospitals NHS Trust.
10. The Royal Bolton Hospital Trust is the main provider of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Additional services are provided by Bolton, Salford and Trafford Mental Health NHS Trust covering several areas in Greater Manchester. In addition, services are provided by Bolton Hospitals NHS Trust.
11. Children's social care services are provided through 99 foster carers, eight children's residential care homes, three family centres, and social care family support teams in two children's centres, six district-based and four borough-wide field social work teams. There are no children's secure units.
12. There are no young offender institutions in the area.

Main findings

13. The main findings of this joint area review are as follows:
 - the contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people at risk or requiring safeguarding is good. Most children and young people feel safe in school and in their local community. The number of child protection re-referrals is higher than the average for similar areas
 - the contribution of local services to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people is adequate. Their educational attainment is low when compared with their peers and they have a relatively higher rate of absence from school. These children have stable placements, most often within families and many who would otherwise be looked after are placed for adoption. There are insufficient placements for those young people on remand needing accommodation
 - the contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. These children enjoy continuity of good quality multi-agency care and support

- the contribution of the 14–19 strategy, including the curriculum, in improving outcomes is adequate. The 14–19 strategy is matched well to local needs and there are good examples of partnership working. There is a high proportion of young people aged 16+ not in education, employment or training. There is insufficient educational provision to support the rehabilitation of all young offenders
- the effectiveness of strategies to improve community cohesion is good. Service managers have an excellent understanding of community issues and the changing demography of the borough. This leads to effective action that promotes fairness, equality and racial harmony
- the quality of services provided to improve sexual health outcomes is good. There is a strong multi-agency approach to providing services and children and young people are able to access these services easily. Bolton has the fourth highest percentage nationally of teenage mothers who access Care2 Learn.

Grades

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

	Local services overall
Safeguarding	3
Looked after children	2
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 disseminate the findings of this report successfully to children and young people in the area
- ensure appropriate arrangements or placements for those young people on remand needing accommodation
- extend further the use of common performance data on outcomes for children and young people across all services.

For action over the next six months

The local partnership should:

- reduce levels of absence from school of looked after children in order to raise their educational attainment
- reduce the number of young people aged 16+ not in education, employment or training, including improving the transition to post-16 vocational provision for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- ensure all young offenders receive sufficient educational provision
- reduce the rate of child protection re-referrals.

For action in the longer term

The local partnership should:

- increase further the proportion of young people achieving five or more good GCSEs or equivalent
- reduce the level of teenage pregnancies.

Equality and diversity

14. The approach shown by the council and its partners to understanding the challenges and opportunities faced relating to diversity, race equality and deprivation is exemplary. Service managers have an excellent understanding of emerging issues and the effects of the changing demography of the borough. As a result, the design and delivery of services is well informed and partners are able to plan for the needs of all children and young people. Partnership working is a strength and community cohesion is a central feature of all areas of work. The council's Fairness Policies are long established and good collaborative working ensures that they are embedded in practice. The Bolton Harmony Forum has broad representation from schools, youth service providers, public, private, voluntary, community and faith organisations and drives strategic planning to promote equality of opportunity for children and young people. Consultation with children and young people has resulted in, for example, the use of multi-coloured silhouettes in the Bolton brand, representing their diverse heritage.

Safeguarding

Inadequate



Adequate



Good



Outstanding



15. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children at risk or requiring safeguarding is good. There are some outstanding features.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>A history of effective inter-agency work to safeguard children.</p> <p>An effective and well-regarded Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).</p> <p>A good range of effective early intervention and family support services.</p> <p>Well-managed advice and assessment services.</p> <p>Good focus on undertaking regular audits that impact on quality of practice.</p> <p>Robust safe recruitment practices and good coordination across agencies to ensure compliance.</p> <p>Very good arrangements to support children who go missing and particularly those at risk of sexual exploitation.</p>	<p>The high level of re-referrals to social care duty teams.</p>

16. Most children and young people say they feel safe in school and in their local community. Few experience bullying and when they do they say their concerns are responded to well. Children and young people have access to a range of advice and support to stay safe, for example in dealing with substance misuse, domestic violence, bullying or racial harassment. The Crucial Crew initiative, run by the police and other emergency services, has enabled young people to have advice on the dangers faced by them and the safety measures they can take to minimise these. Young people at risk of sexual exploitation are identified sufficiently early to allow preventative action to be taken. They and those who go missing from home, care or education receive excellent support, with good access to mentoring, emotional support and advice regarding health, sex and relationships and healthy eating.

17. Social care advice and assessment services are very well resourced and managed by skilled, experienced practitioners. Referrals are responded to in a timely manner and there is good work between agencies to help families get the support they need. The out-of-hours duty arrangements are closely linked into daytime services and there is very effective communication with the police, particularly in relation to domestic violence incidents where children are in the

household. Effective arrangements are in place with the long-term social work teams, which ensure cases are transferred without delay.

18. The number of children and families referred to social care services who receive an initial assessment is much better than the national average as a result of good practice and concerted efforts to focus inter-agency work on early assessments and prevention. The number has increased significantly, having been previously much lower than the national average. The percentage of initial assessments is also good, being above the national average, despite a recent significant reduction. The number of child protection investigations leading to initial child protection conferences has more than doubled since 2006, but remains below the England average. Bolton has fewer children on the child protection register than the national average. The number of core assessments completed has increased but remains lower than national and similar area averages. The proportion of these assessments completed on time is broadly average. The percentage of re-referrals remains higher than national and similar area averages.

19. The council has maintained very good performance over recent years and continues to ensure that all children on the child protection register have an allocated social worker. Very few children remain on the register for over two years. Child protection assessments and plans are of a good quality. The focus on risk assessment and management is very good. All children on the register have their protection plans reviewed on time. This is better than the national average. Overall, the multi-agency child protection system works well and thresholds for deciding the level of service to children are well understood across agencies. Good use is made of the locally developed child concern model for supporting families in need. This approach is effective in ensuring that families get the support they need early through a lead person coordinating services. Attendance at child protection conferences and core groups by staff from the key agencies and the families of children is generally good and this ensures that child protection plans are progressed well. The arrangements also enable the children to contribute their views.

20. There is an excellent range of family support and preventative services to support children and families. Services are focusing effectively on the needs of black and minority ethnic families, and the development of specific services has reduced family isolation and improved take up of these services. The services offered by the Bolton Lads and Girls Club are highly valued by young people, as is the service provided by the Bridges project to families of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The social work family support service has been reorganised to provide support to older young people, but this has not yet had sufficient time to reduce the number entering the care system. Families of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support in caring for their children. They are provided with excellent and well-coordinated packages of support. Privately fostered children and those who seek asylum are safeguarded well.

21. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is managed effectively and plays a significant role in the strategic planning and management of safeguarding arrangements. Its work is well regarded both regionally and nationally. There is effective monitoring of plans and good history of achieving many of its action plans within good timescales. A Health and Well-being Executive ensures that there is good focus on safeguarding across health services. Good work with community and faith groups and voluntary agencies has raised awareness of how to safeguard and protect children. The LSCB has a good focus on core child protection work and good strategies are being developed to meet its new and wider responsibilities. There are well-established arrangements for undertaking serious case reviews and good examples of the lessons learned being used to improve practice. The LSCB is well on the way to establishing a local Child Death Review Panel ahead of national requirements.

22. Children and young people are provided with safe settings including residential care. Most schools are judged to have at least good arrangements for keeping children safe. The number of children seriously injured or killed on roads has continued to fall but the rate of reduction is lower than the national and similar area averages. A draft accident prevention strategy, with challenging targets to reduce the number, has been completed but has yet to be implemented across agencies.

23. There are effective arrangements in place to supervise staff, monitor performance and ensure quality and standards across agencies. There is a highly regarded, comprehensive and well-established multi-agency training programme. Managers use random audits regularly to check how services are working and lessons learnt from these are used well to improve practice across agencies. Robust arrangements are in place to ensure safe recruitment practices across agencies. Appropriate checks are made and the council has an effective system for recording, monitoring and reviewing the arrangements. The LSCB and the council provide good leadership, particularly to schools and partners, through training, guidance and practical support. Good arrangements are in place to respond to allegations against professionals. The PCT uses a good range of strategies to promote and ensure safeguarding arrangements across locations and services.

24. Arrangements for the management of dangerous offenders and those who pose a risk to children are good. The implementation of the Common Assessment Framework, information sharing and Contact Point are already progressing well and are on track to be implemented in good time.

Looked after children and young people

Inadequate Adequate Good Outstanding

25. The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people is adequate.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Very good health surveillance and support.</p> <p>High levels of placement stability as a result of low use of residential care coupled with high use of family placement and adoption and good levels of culturally appropriate placement choice.</p> <p>High numbers of children attend their reviews.</p>	<p>Low educational attainment.</p> <p>The high rate of young offenders remanded to secure accommodation.</p>

26. Looked after children in Bolton live in placements which are amongst the most stable in the country. The number of children living in family or adoptive placements is high and improving. The placement choice available to children has expanded and virtually all children have a qualified social worker allocated to their case. The number of health assessments is higher than that of similar councils and reflects the council's explicit commitment to being a good corporate parent. Looked after young people have high levels of absence from school, however, and their educational attainment is low.

27. The number of children entering the looked after system has been steadily rising over a six-year period, due largely to parental substance misuse. Nevertheless, the council looks after fewer children than the national average. The rise is now slowing due to the council's interventions. The level of funding for looked after children is lower than the averages nationally and of similar areas. A comprehensive family support service is available and the service was reorganised in 2006 to cover the full age range of children from 0 to 19. The number of children on care orders placed at home has slightly reduced but remains high, the result in part of the policy of the local courts. The council has significantly reduced the number of children in residential care. The availability of placement choice is good, including for children from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. The number in family placement has improved and is now above those locally and nationally. The council has halved the number of children placed outside the borough from 79 to 38 as a result of a successful campaign to recruit more foster carers. Performance in placing children for adoption is good. The council has ensured services meet the needs of black and minority ethnic communities.

28. The quality of care planning is good. Staff are clear about national and local priorities for completing assessments, plans and reviews. Almost all looked after children (99.6%) have a qualified social worker allocated to their case, which is significantly above both the national average and that of similar

councils. Robust performance management systems ensure children receive statutory visits to their placements. Senior officers and councillors take effective action based upon regular performance information. As a result, the timeliness of reviews has improved and is now better than both the national average and that of similar councils. Most looked after children attend their reviews and those who do not are kept informed.

29. The educational performance of looked after children is broadly average and improving when compared to that of looked after children nationally, but nevertheless remains too low at Key stages 3 and 4. For example, according to the local authority's own data in 2006 only 9.1% of looked after children in Bolton achieved five or more higher grade GCSEs, compared to over 50% of all other children in the area. All looked after children have an individual personal education plan which is regularly reviewed. The overall level of attendance at school by looked after children is broadly similar to the average for all children nationally. Nevertheless, a minority of looked after children in Bolton are absent from school more than in comparable areas, with absences of more than 25 days at 15.3% compared to 13.4% in similar areas.

30. Very high numbers of looked after children receive health and dental checks. This is the result of a voucher scheme allowing easy access to local dentists, which is popular with children and their carers due to the choice it offers, and the provision of a designated doctor, nurse and specialist nurse. Sexual health needs are met through a number of services and young people spoke highly of services to meet their sexual health needs. Comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are available. Health and social care workers confirm that it is easy to get CAMHS appointments for looked after children.

31. There is a very high rate of 73% of young offenders remanded to secure accommodation, compared to between 38% and 44% nationally.

32. There are effective arrangements to enable the council to carry out its responsibilities as a corporate parent and these have led to several important improvements in services, such as the Looked After Supported Employment (LASE) scheme. Young people who are looked after are provided with free passes allowing access to swimming and gym facilities, the local football stadium, football matches and the theatre. There is an effective advocacy service for looked after young people commissioned from a national voluntary organisation. The complaints system operates well and incorporates a number of ways for young people to air their views or grievances or compliment the service. A dedicated and well-resourced team provides effective support to children leaving care. The team links into a wide range of other services, including the LASE scheme, and facilitates work and training placements for young people in the local community. The long-term housing needs of care leavers are catered for well.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Inadequate Adequate Good Outstanding

33. **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>The continuity of care for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families.</p> <p>The long-standing partnerships between different agencies and the quality and impact of their multi-disciplinary working.</p> <p>Respite and shared care arrangements.</p> <p>The quality and availability of continuous professional development and training for practitioners and carers.</p> <p>The impact of the work to promote inclusion.</p> <p>The work of advisory and support services to schools in improving the quality of practice in schools.</p>	<p>Limited use of the data collected, including exclusions, to develop a borough-wide overview of the achievement and standards of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.</p> <p>Limited focus and consultation with special schools within the 14–19 partnership plans.</p> <p>The quality of support some young people and their families receive when transferring to adult services.</p>

34. The council has a very inclusive approach to its provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It works well with its partners to meet the needs of children, families and carers. The management of services and support to schools and other agencies through targeted and specialist work is a strength. Strategic planning is good. Many practitioners, officers and carers are long-standing employees within the health, care and education services in Bolton. This makes a very strong contribution to the continuity of care that children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families and carers receive. It leads to effective, high-quality relationships between practitioners and services and underpins multi-agency work.

35. Parents and carers consider that the support the council provides for them and the quality of care and support their children receive is generally good or better. Parents spoke highly of the advice and guidance they can access through *On the record*, which is the newsletter for families of children and young people with disabilities, but felt less well informed about direct payments and lead professionals/key workers. A few parents expressed concerns about arrangements to support their children's transition to post-16 education and training.

36. There is a good range of advisory services providing effective and valued support to schools, including the council's Inclusion Effectiveness Team. Links between services such as the Black and Ethnic Minority Advisory Service (BEMAS) and the school improvement service are highly effective. Several areas of work are outstanding, including the work of the Special Educational Needs Information and Advisory Service (SENIAS), the learning support service (FOCUS) and the practical advice, guidance and support provided to schools caring for children and young people with complex medical needs. The range and quality of training and professional development available to schools and practitioners is very good. The statutory assessment of special educational needs is good. The number of statements of special educational need completed on time has increased, although the proportion of those including exceptions was well below that in similar areas, despite significant recent improvements.

37. A well-considered review of special education provision is already having a positive impact on the students in schools. Specialist provision is now mainly attached to schools. This creates good support and access for children and young people where it is most needed. Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) and headteachers report that consultation with them and their involvement in planning has improved over the past year. Staff in mainstream settings welcome the increased opportunities to use the expertise in special schools. As a result, the quality of practice in mainstream settings is improving.

38. Many children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are educated successfully within mainstream settings. The proportion is significantly higher than that found nationally or in similar authorities. Ofsted inspections judge the inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in mainstream schools to be predominantly good or better. In the majority of primary schools the pupils' progress is good and in secondary schools it is at least satisfactory when compared to national averages or similar areas. The quality and effectiveness of most aspects of special school provision in Bolton is predominantly good or better. The council ensures that children placed outside the borough receive a quality service. The proportion of children in out-of-borough places has more than halved since 2000. Annual reviews of the progress of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are of high quality. A high proportion of the children and young people participate in these reviews and contribute to their transition plans. Generally, schools track and monitor the progress of children and young people with

learning difficulties and/or disabilities very well. As yet, however, use of the information it gathers to arrive at a collective, borough-wide evaluation of provision is limited. There have been no permanent exclusions from special schools in recent years and the proportion of fixed-term exclusions is well below comparator groups. This is a strength. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need excluded from mainstream settings increased between 2004 and 2005, however, and is well above that found nationally or in similar authorities.

39. Provision for 14–19 year olds in special schools with sixth forms is outstanding. More generally, 14–19 provision and work-based learning opportunities for young people with learning disabilities and/or disabilities, whilst adequate overall, are insufficiently developed to meet the full range of needs. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good support from Connexions. A young adults team has been formed in order to enable more effective transition to adult services. As a result, an improving picture is emerging for post-16 transition, although it is too early to gauge the full impact of these changes.

40. The health needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met well. The increased involvement of healthcare professionals and the delivery of support services such as paediatrics and Speech And Language Therapy (SALT) in schools and children's centres are making it easier for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their parents/carers to access these services. The local authority is working well in partnership with the PCT, for example, two additional jointly funded speech and language therapists have recently been appointed to work mainly in secondary schools.

41. Respite care provided by Bolton Shared Care, Bridges, Trackside and through partnership arrangements such as Pocket Nook is outstanding. Officers take great care to partner carers with families and are very sensitive to specific needs, especially those of a cultural nature. As a result, relationships between carers and families and the quality of care are excellent and have a very positive impact on the quality of families' lives.

42. The range of voluntary learning and leisure activities available to children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in Bolton is adequate. The council has provided and has plans for more innovative and creative activities, although individual children's experience of these varies and they think the range is limited. Children and young people in special schools are provided with outstanding opportunities to make a positive contribution. They know that their views are heard and acted on wherever possible. All of the children and young people spoken to during the course of this review felt that there is much more they can offer to the Bolton family more generally and expressed a strong desire to do so.

Other issues identified for further investigation

An investigation to evaluate the contribution of the 14–19 strategy, including the curriculum, in improving outcomes

43. The contribution of the 14–19 strategy, including the curriculum, in improving outcomes is adequate. There are some good features.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Effective arrangements for providing young people with information, advice and guidance.</p> <p>Wide range of collaborative projects at 14–16, with well-developed alternative curriculum arrangements.</p> <p>Very effective approach to developing the 14–19 specialised diplomas.</p> <p>Effective re-engagement of young people through the pupil referral units.</p> <p>High pass rates for gifted and talented pupils.</p>	<p>Below average attainment at Key Stage 4 and in AS/A2 courses.</p> <p>High proportion of young people aged 16 who are not in education, employment or training as a result of post-16 provision that fails to engage some young people.</p> <p>Insufficient educational provision for young offenders.</p> <p>Insufficient collaborative arrangements between schools and colleges to deliver GCE A levels across the area.</p>

44. The 14–19 strategy is well matched to local needs. It is based on a clear needs analysis and focuses well on improving learning and achievement. It links well to other council plans for regeneration and neighbourhood renewal. Partnership working is strong between most key partners and stakeholders.

45. Attainment at the end of Key stage 4 is broadly in line with that of similar areas. The number achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A*–C is improving, but still below the national average. All schools are already performing above the minimum targets for 2008. The council has successfully raised attainment levels amongst underachieving groups that have been targeted for additional support. For example, the achievement of Pakistani-heritage pupils has significantly improved.

46. Standards of achievement at AS and A2 levels are lower than the national average. Value-added at post-16 is satisfactory overall. A range of Aimhigher projects is effective in raising young people's aspirations, but outcomes are not recorded well. Achievement by gifted and talented pupils is good. Progression to university is improving but is below the north-west region average. Too few work-based learners have opportunities to progress to higher education. Success rates have improved but are low at Level 2. Retention rates are improving but are still low. Across the area, achievement of Level 2 and Level 3

at 19 years is improving; it is in line with regional and national rates at Level 2 but slightly below at Level 3. Success rates in apprenticeships have improved and are satisfactory but participation is broadly static. Progression from apprenticeships to advanced apprenticeships is low.

47. Collaborative provision at Key stage 4 is extensive and includes all schools, colleges and work-based learning providers. A wide range of courses and alternative programmes is provided, including an innovative project called Powerwave which provides construction training to over 300 young people each week. Success and progression rates are good. There are very effective collaborative approaches to developing 14–19 specialised diplomas. At 16–18, however, there are few collaborative arrangements between schools and colleges, particularly to deliver AS and A2 courses and ensure students in all areas can access a wide range of subjects easily.

48. Effective foundation level and E2E programmes are available post-16. Progression rates are satisfactory overall. Provision post-16 for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate overall, but the availability of vocational training and work-based learning for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is limited. Pupil referral units are appropriately located in each 14–19 cluster. They provide effective education and training for pupils permanently excluded from school. Attendance at these is good, pupils develop well both socially and emotionally and many progress to further education and training. Insufficient specialist provision post-16 delays the progress of some young people with language support needs.

49. Most young people are aware of the full range of learning opportunities available post-16. Good improvements have been made in the provision of information, advice and guidance. A 14–19 online directory has been developed with hyperlinks to institutional prospectuses, although a few pages are incomplete. Slow progress is being made towards an area-wide common applications procedure. Good progress is being made at meeting the Government's September Guarantee of providing places in education, employment or training for all young people. There is a good range of 14–19 provision available to young people and most is of a good quality. At post-16, however, it is not meeting the needs of some young people resulting in a high proportion (currently 10.8%) not in education, employment or training, particularly young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and looked after children. The partnership has a good range of initiatives to reduce the proportion not in education, employment or training. The Connexions service has developed very effective tracking systems and the proportion of young people whose situation is unknown is low. Pupils at risk of being not in education, employment or training are identified early, particularly in areas with high incidence of young people not in education, employment or training, and they receive additional support through a range of projects which provide flexible personalised programmes. The educational needs of some young offenders are not being met prior to involvement with the Youth Offending

Team (YOT). Learning provided by schools to these young people is insufficient and in some instances they receive only one hour per week direct contact.

An investigation into the effectiveness of strategies to improve community cohesion

50. The effectiveness of strategies to improve community cohesion is good.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Effective work by the council and its partners to take account of the needs of young people in all parts of the community and improve provision to meet these needs as a result of service managers' excellent understanding of emerging issues and the changing demography of the borough.</p> <p>Clear identification of issues leading to effective action including the development of innovative projects and support.</p> <p>Good communication systems and procedures for information sharing leading to efficient use of resources and intervention.</p> <p>Good promotion of racial harmony, fairness and equality across agencies and partners.</p>	<p>Limited opportunities for some young people to contribute to decision making.</p>

51. Bolton Council and its partners have a strong commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and enabling all children and young people to achieve highly, be healthy and stay safe. Racial tension was not perceived as an issue by most young people and adults when asked. Most young people report that any incidents of racism or bullying that arise are dealt with swiftly and decisively. Targeted action has raised educational attainment amongst Pakistani-heritage children and young people. The council has invested in in-depth external evaluations in order to understand fully the challenges it faces relating to diversity, race equality and deprivation. Reviews, carried out regularly by all children's services, effectively identify barriers that may lead to discrimination and establish actions that need to be taken. Consequently, service managers have an excellent understanding of emerging issues and effects of the changing demography of the borough. As a result, the design and

delivery of services is well informed and partners are able to plan for the needs of all children and young people.

52. Partnership working is a strength and community cohesion is a central feature of all areas of work. The Bolton Harmony Forum has broad representation from schools, youth service providers, public, private, voluntary, community and faith organisations and drives strategic planning to promote equality of opportunity for children and young people. The Bolton Interfaith Council and Strategic Consultation Groups are effective in engaging faith, community and voluntary groups in shaping policies and provision for young people. The council has a strong and constructive relationship with the Bolton Council of Mosques (BCOM), which provides good advice about the needs of Asian young people and is increasingly engaged in the delivery of youth provision. Action taken to raise the attainment of Pakistani-heritage pupils has resulted in a significant rise in the proportion gaining good GCSEs in 2007. The establishment of community associations and refugee and traveller forums is enabling partners to understand better and meet the needs of new African communities and Eastern European migrant workers arriving in the borough.

53. A consistently good partnership approach is evident through the work of services such as the Fairness Team, Drug and Alcohol Action Team, the Careers, Education and Guidance Team, the BeSafe partnership and ethnic minority, traveller and gypsy services. Schools, the play service and youth service providers play an important part in the promotion of fairness and community cohesion amongst young people. Good communication systems and procedures for sharing information lead to efficient use of resources and intervention at community level and in meeting the needs of individual children and young people. The multi-agency Tension Monitoring Group provides an excellent forum through which services can identify and tackle issues in schools and communities before tension escalates. Police information about potential problems in the Deane area, for example, enabled the play and youth services to target positive activities in the area and tension was averted.

54. Services are responding well to the changing needs of an increasingly diverse population. The new and emerging communities strategy is based on good levels of consultation with asylum seekers and refugees and strongly focused on promoting community cohesion and a sense of belonging. The development of innovative projects, such Starting Point, provides very good support and induction for international new arrivals of school age. Police have engaged well with the Somali community following high levels of crime by Somali young people, and levels of anti-social behaviour and crime by this group has reduced. The revised gypsy and traveller strategy takes good account of the needs of the growing population of migrant workers.

55. There are good opportunities for young people to contribute their views and make a positive contribution to the wider community and there has been a high level of engagement with young people in shaping the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). Most schools have effective councils through which

children and young people contribute their views. However, opportunities for young people engaged with the YOT and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to contribute their views are limited. Preventative and early intervention services by the YOT are well established in areas with high levels of deprivation and are effective in reducing anti-social behaviour in those areas. Bolton achieved a Beacon Award in 2007 for tackling anti-social behaviour.

56. The play service, the youth service and voluntary providers offer good quality opportunities for young people to participate in accredited learning and in activities that promote personal development. Provision meets the needs of those who take part well. Targeted provision for young people from minority ethnic groups, such as the Just 4 Girls Club, and for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is popular. The quality of service is good and providers have met their targets relating to the number of young people engaged in activities and achieving accredited outcomes. However, young people do not always find it easy to know what options are available in their local area, and consequently some young people who would benefit from provision are not engaged.

57. Services use local intelligence well to target outreach resources and provide good preventative work in areas of potential youth nuisance. Drug and alcohol related activity by young people is, however, a problem in particular areas of the borough and is a source of inter-generational tension within some white and minority ethnic communities. It is also a cause of tension between youths from different communities, sometimes resulting in conflict between gangs. Partners are taking a proactive approach to tackling drug and alcohol related anti-social behaviour and crime amongst young people. There is a good multi-agency approach to raising awareness, promoting positive activities and providing family support as well as policing. Young people value the work of community police officers, who work closely with community and faith leaders, and are supportive of the clear and strong line taken in dealing with drug- and alcohol-related behaviour.

An investigation into the quality of services provided to improve sexual health outcomes

58. **The quality of services provided to improve sexual health outcomes is good.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Strong multi-agency and multi-professional working.</p> <p>Good engagement of young people in the promotion of health awareness.</p>	<p>Slow overall reductions in the teenage pregnancy rate compared to similar area and national rates.</p>

<p>Strong commitment to sustain access to screening for sexually transmitted diseases.</p> <p>Good commitment of funding from the council and the PCT to sustain improvements in sexual health outcomes.</p> <p>Access to services for young people.</p>	
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59. There is strong multi-agency, multi-professional working to improve the sexual health of young people. The Teenage Pregnancy Team is highly qualified, with a wide range of expertise. It is able to influence decisions at strategic level and has implemented changes in service delivery quickly. These changes are beginning to have an impact. The conception rate for young people under 18 has begun to show a reduction. Screening for Chlamydia is very effective and easily accessed by young people. As a result, the number of young people using the service has increased. Young people contribute well to health promotion, peer education and support.

60. A recent review of sexual health services in Bolton by the Medical Foundation for Aids and Sexual Health (MEDFASH) concluded they were excellent and noted that the genito-urinary medicine (GUM) services consistently achieved 48-hour access and that staff were very well qualified. The GUM services are of high quality. Young people's access to screening for sexually transmitted infections has improved. A high level of clinical expertise, simple testing and treatment is available in youth centres, with the result that more young people are using the service. A GUM consultant service is available at The Parallel Youth Health Centre and within the acute hospital GUM service. The availability of an integrated service with the acute hospital means that young people have good continuity of service at all times. Services are targeted well at meeting the needs of vulnerable groups of young people. For example, the Chlamydia screening programme offers easy access to advice and treatment to young people involved with the YOT and substance misuse services. Current figures indicate an increased uptake of screening, resulting in more effective treatment.

61. Young people's views have had a major influence on the development of sexual health services and have led to improvements. The Parallel Youth Health Centre was designed for and by young people and is located in a discrete, well-maintained part of the town centre. Young people speak very positively about this service. Effective targeted interventions in areas of high need have resulted in young people from these areas being engaged effectively in tackling sexual health needs across the borough. For example, 'Safe night out' packs designed by young people include condoms, advice about alcohol and contact numbers of support agencies and have been distributed across the borough to encourage

responsible behaviour. Other young people have been trained as peer educators at the Bolton Lads and Girls Club.

62. Young people have timely access to advice, information and treatment in various easily accessible settings across the borough, including youth clubs, drop-in facilities within secondary schools and two outreach satellite health centres. Services ensure that there is equitable access for diverse groups of children and young people. The outreach centre at Farnworth also incorporates a pupil referral unit effectively ensuring that a group of vulnerable young people has easy access to and information about general and sexual health services. This is resulting in the early engagement of young people in health and well-being issues. Recent work undertaken at The Parallel Youth Health Centre has improved access for young people with physical disabilities.

63. The Parallel Youth Health Centre is nationally renowned as a 'centre of excellence'. It offers a comprehensive range of health and well-being services for 11–19 year olds and has successfully increased the number of young people accessing services, particularly amongst groups that previously experienced difficulties using the services. For example, there has been a 5.2% rise in young people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds using services since the centre opened in 2003. An open-door, free access policy, with a strong ethos of individual support and respect for the young person's opinions and rights ensures that the centre provides a holistic approach to health care. As a result it is highly regarded by young people.

64. There is strong inter-agency working to support personal, social and health education (PSHE) and sex and relationship education (SRE) in primary and secondary schools. Bolton has increased the number of school nurses employed since 2006. Combined training events and resources have resulted in most schools participating in the Healthy Schools programme. Drop-in health clinics have been established in 13 of 16 secondary schools and demonstrate effective working between the Teenage Pregnancy Team and the SRE officer. Attendance by young people is good. Effective use of additional funding from external sources has increased educational resources within schools, such as 'virtual babies' and resource boxes to support lessons. Young mothers have been engaged well in improving the quality of SRE, making educational videos more relevant to the needs of young people.

65. Bolton has been very successful in ensuring teenage mothers re-engage with education and training. It has the fourth highest percentage nationally of teenage mothers who access Care2 Learn, providing funded childcare so they can access further education. Teenage mothers receive good support and advice, preparing them for decisions concerning future pregnancies. The service both benefits from the Teenage Pregnancy Coordinator's liaison with the Department of Health and contributes to national policy. All services are fully engaged in putting the teenage pregnancy strategy into effect. The conception rate for under-18s has reduced from 2004–06, albeit slowly, and is now below that of comparable authorities and the national average. Targeted work has

resulted in a good level of improvement in one 'hot spot' area, with conceptions decreased from 83 in 2005/06 to 62 in 2006/07. A second area has now been targeted as a result of a slight increase in conceptions during the same period.

Service management



Capacity to improve



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Effective consultation with children and young people leading to service improvements.</p> <p>The quality of partnership working.</p> <p>Effective management of human resources as a result of the quality of leadership and excellent approaches to workforce development, leading to stable staffing.</p> <p>The use made of external reports to bring about service improvements.</p> <p>Links between corporate, service and individuals' development plans.</p>	<p>Inconsistencies in the use of performance information by different services.</p>

67. Service management is clearly improving the quality of young people's lives. Since January 2007, when a new and experienced Director of Children's Services was appointed, the directorate has made better use of data and has ensured roles and responsibilities are organised more clearly to meet the needs of children. The staffing of the service is stable and there are few vacancies, although the use of short-term contracts in parts of the voluntary sector is leading to a degree of uncertainty about the future of services. A good CYPP has been developed following effective consultation with the service and

partners, and links well to other key local strategies. The council makes good use of evaluations, including reports by external agencies, to identify strengths and weaknesses, and takes action to improve services.

68. Ambition is good. The council has high ambitions for its children and young people. Partnership working is good. Major stakeholders, including the voluntary and health sectors, are actively involved in developing children's services. There are clear links between the community strategy, corporate plan and CYPP which ensure that resources are focused.

69. Consultation with children and young people is good and, together with good data and needs analysis, has clearly informed the council's ambitions. Parents and carers are also consulted. Consultation has made a difference to the way in which services are provided. For example, the High Street Library attracted funding to support an innovative arts-based consultation which has led to the creation of a bespoke children's service called 'head room', managed by young people. There is a children's consultation forum of some 400 members, and two young people represent Bolton at the Youth Parliament.

70. The approach to setting priorities is good. The CYPP and the service improvement action plans have established a challenging, long-term approach to meeting the council's priorities, including improving educational attainment. Good progress is being made on the priority to modernise school buildings through the Building Schools for the Future programme, which is designed to explicitly support community cohesion and address areas of multiple deprivation. Priorities within the CYPP link well to the views expressed by children, young people, parents and staff, although this is not universal, for example the YOT does not consult effectively with young offenders. The CYPP contains an appropriate balance between local and national priorities.

71. The approach to service planning is consistent, using an approach designed to promote clear ownership and performance management, but also to link in closely to partners' priorities. Corporate plans link together well and demonstrate consistently the 'Bolton Vision'. There are clear links also between these plans and individual personal development plans. Service improvement action plans are key to this inter-relationship. The council is effectively bringing about improvements in services through the rigorous development and monitoring of plans and the reallocation of resources to meet needs. Examples of this include interventions to target needs in particular geographical areas, such as providing open-access facilities on an estate where significant numbers of young people needed somewhere to go because parents are not at home at certain times of day.

72. Diversity and equality are integrated well into every aspect of children's services. This is due to the Fairness agenda which has been adopted both across services and has established very good, clear working practices.

73. Capacity is good. Structures for making decisions work well. Project management is strong and all projects are reviewed rigorously. The quality of leadership provided by the director and senior managers is good, and recent appointments have enhanced capacity. There are effective working relationships with schools and other partners. Political leadership is good. Senior councillors are knowledgeable about their roles and statutory responsibilities are discharged effectively. They carry out their roles as corporate parents well.

74. There is an embedded and comprehensive medium-term financial strategy, which is delivering good value for money, for example the council has reduced the number of expensive out-of-borough-placements for looked after children as a result of a successful drive to recruit more foster carers locally. There is strong budgetary control. The fostering initiative has produced considerable savings and enhanced the local provision of care. The overall approach to commissioning is at an early stage, but there is good joint commissioning undertaken with the PCT.

75. Performance management is good. Well-managed systems provide regular, detailed information for managers and staff. This has resulted, for example, in a reduction in the number of children on the child protection register. The degree to which performance information is used within different services is inconsistent, however, and, as a result, services are not equally aware of how they contribute to the major outcomes for children and young people. Councillors scrutinise the work of the services adequately and challenge portfolio holders and officers to improve performance. Good use is made of staff appraisals. Children are involved in reviews of the services they receive.

76. Capacity for further improvement is good. The performance of the service has improved over recent years and has accelerated rapidly this year. Improvements are clearly recognised by partners. The directorate has a good awareness of its strengths and areas needing improvement, supported by good use of external evaluations, and is demonstrating its ability to tackle weaknesses through good performance management and a clear focus on value for money. The director, senior managers and other partners are providing a strong sense of direction coupled with a realistic view of the significant challenges the directorate is facing. Service planning is good and improving, with good project management arrangements in place for major initiatives. The directorate has excellent workforce development strategies. These are evident at all levels of the service.

Annex A

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

The council consistently delivers services for children and young people at a good level, although in one aspect an adequate contribution is made by services towards improving outcomes. The council recognises the need for further improvement in attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4, building upon the sustained improvement achieved in recent years. Children's services has continued to build upon the strengths noted in last year's APA, and has tackled, or is tackling, all the identified areas for improvement. Further progress has been made in developing opportunities for young people aged 14–19 where strong strategic planning and collaborative partnerships are having an impact. Partnership with other agencies and appropriate needs analysis has remained strong. Overall capacity for improvement is good.

The full annual performance assessment can be found at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=269180&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\apa_2007_350.pdf

Annex B

CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. The 2007 Annual Performance Assessment (APA) noted that the contribution of the council's services to improving health outcomes for children and young people is good. The quality of services provided to improve sexual health outcomes is good. There is strong multi-agency, multi-professional working to improve sexual health of young people, led by the Teenage Pregnancy Team. The team members are highly qualified, with a wide range of expertise. Screening for Chlamydia is effective and has led to increased numbers of young people accessing the service.
2. In the 2007 APA, the contribution of the council's services to improving safeguarding outcomes for children and young people is good. The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children at risk or requiring safeguarding is good, with some excellent features. The council has maintained very good performance over recent years and continues to ensure that all children on the child protection register have an allocated social worker. Most children and young people say they feel safe in school and in their local community. Few experience bullying and when they do they say their concerns are responded to well. Young people at risk of sexual exploitation and those who go missing from home, care or education receive excellent support, with good access to mentoring, emotional support and advice regarding health, sex and relationships and healthy eating. The number of children seriously injured or killed on roads has continued to fall but the rate of reduction is lower than the national and similar area averages. The percentage of child protection re-referrals remains higher than national and similar area averages.
3. In the 2007 APA, the contribution of the council's services to improving outcomes for children and young people in enjoying and achieving is adequate. The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people is adequate. Looked after children live in placements which are amongst the most stable in the country. The number of children living in family or adoptive placements is high and improving. The placement choice available to children has expanded and virtually all children have a qualified social worker allocated to their case. The number of health assessments is higher than that of similar councils and reflects the council's explicit commitment to being a good corporate parent. The educational attainment of young people looked after is low, however.
4. The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The local authority has a very inclusive approach. It works well with its partners to meet the needs of children, families and carers. The management of services and support to schools and other agencies through targeted and specialist work is a strength. The health needs of children and young people with learning

difficulties and/or disabilities are met well. Many children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are educated successfully within mainstream settings. The proportion is significantly higher than that found nationally or in similar authorities. In the majority of primary schools the pupils' progress is good and in secondary schools it is at least satisfactory when compared to national or similar area averages. The arrangements to support the transition of young people to education, employment and training do not work sufficiently effectively for all.

5. The 2007 APA notes that the council made a good contribution to securing the economic well-being of children and young people. The contribution of the 14–19 strategy, including the curriculum, in improving outcomes is adequate. There are good features. The strategy is based on a clear needs analysis and focuses well on improving learning and achievement. It links well to other council plans for regeneration and neighbourhood renewal. The level of achievement of five or more good GCSEs is improving but is still below the national average. There is a good range of 14–19 provision available to young people and most is of a good quality, but at post-16 it is failing to engage some young people, resulting in a high proportion not in education, employment or training.

6. The effectiveness of strategies to improve community cohesion is good. The council's approach to understanding the challenges and opportunities it faces relating to diversity, race equality and deprivation is exemplary. Bolton Council and its partners have a strong commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and enabling all children and young people to achieve highly, be healthy and stay safe. Service managers have an excellent understanding of emerging issues and effects of the changing demography of the borough. Partnership working is a strength and community cohesion is a central feature of all areas of work.

7. The quality of services provided to improve sexual health outcomes is good. The conception rate for young people under 18 has begun to show a reduction. Screening for Chlamydia is very effective and easily accessed by young people. As a result, the number of young people using the service has increased. Young people contribute well to health promotion, peer education and support.

8. The management of services for children and young people continues to be good. Capacity to improve further is good. Service management is clearly impacting on the quality of young people's lives. The council has high ambitions for the children and young people. Partnership working is good. The approach to setting priorities is good. There is a comprehensive medium-term financial strategy, which is delivering good value for money, and strong budgetary control. Well-managed performance management systems provide regular, detailed information for managers and staff. The degree to which performance information is used within different services is inconsistent, however, and, as a

result, not all services are equally aware of how they contribute to the major outcomes for children and young people.

Annex C

SUMMARY OF JOINT AREA REVIEW AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS

1. This joint area review was conducted using the arrangements required under Section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of inspectors from Ofsted, the Healthcare Commission and the Audit Commission. The review was undertaken according to the requirements of the *Framework for the inspection of children's services*.
2. The review was linked to the contemporaneous corporate assessment of the local council by the Audit Commission and these findings, plus aspects of the most recent APA, 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 Bolton and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being. Together with the APA 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, 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).