

Joint Area Review

**Bath and North East Somerset 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: 9 September 2008

Reference no: 800



© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the local authority or at www.ofsted.gov.uk

Contents

Introduction	2
Context	2
Main findings	5
Grades	6
Recommendations	6
Areas for investigation through fieldwork during the joint area review	
1. Safeguarding	8
2. Looked after children and young people	11
3. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	15
4. Additional investigations	19
5. Service management	22
6. Capacity to improve	22
Annex A: The APA letter	27
Annex B: Summary of the enhanced youth inspection report	28
Annex C: Children and young people's section of the corporate assessment report	30
Annex D: Summary of joint area review and annual performance assessment arrangements	32

Introduction

1. The most recent annual performance assessment (APA) for Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) 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 investigation was also carried out:
 - the impact of the partners' strategy in addressing the needs and well-being of children and young people from a Black and minority ethnic background.

Context

4. B&NES is a unitary authority located in the South West of England. The authority was formed in 1996 when the County of Avon was abolished. The new authority combined the duties of Avon with those of Wansdyke District Council and Bath City Council. The area ranks as one of the least deprived in England although there are small pockets of deprivation.
5. The total population is 175,000 with 23% in the 0–19 age group (40,400). The overall population is growing. The birth rate is lower than the national average (9.8 per 1,000 compared to a national rate of 12.5). Approximately 9.4% of the population is aged 20–24 years compared with 6.6% across England. The Black and minority ethnic population comprises 2.8% of the total and 7.9% of the school population and is dispersed across the area with a higher concentration in Bath.
6. Children's social care services are provided through:
 - prevention services that support children, young people, parents and carers in the community
 - a fostering service with 73 registered mainstream and therapeutic foster carers providing a total of 127 approved placements. There are no residential homes within B&NES
 - 32 independent sector foster placements and five placements in 52-week residential establishments.

7. There are six field social work teams and a specialist family centre that works with 11–18 year olds. Other specialist and social work services are located in established multi-disciplinary and integrated teams, such as the Youth Offending Team and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). A range of family support services are provided through early years, extended services and children's centres via the Early Years and Extended Services Teams working with children aged 0–11. March 2008 data show that there were 62 children with child protection plans, all of which are the formal responsibility of the council. There are 125 looked after children and young people.

8. Pre-16 education is provided by:

- nine designated nursery units attached to primary schools (two integrated into children's centre services) providing 441 part-time equivalent places, and a further 264 settings (that is, childminders, playgroups, full day care and nursery units in independent schools) providing 2,470 nursery education places for three and four year olds
- eight designated children's centres
- 62 primary schools
- 13 secondary schools
- two special schools for learning difficulties and/or disabilities, three designated special units within mainstream position
- one special school for behavioural, emotional and social difficulties, one pupil referral unit and a hospital education and reintegration service which is part of an integrated specialist behaviour service.

9. Post-16 education and training is provided by:

- 11 mainstream schools with sixth forms (providing for approximately 37% of 16–18 year olds)
- two special schools for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- two further education (FE) colleges within B&NES. One of these colleges has three sites across the authority including one site shared with an 11–16 school
- five independent schools with sixth forms
- a number of other FE colleges in neighbouring authorities, including one sixth form college which has post-16 places for the two B&NES 11–16 faith-based schools

- four local work-based training providers in addition to a wide range of training providers in neighbouring authorities
- in 2007, the 'in learning' rate for Year 11 leavers was 91.4% (42% in sixth form provision in their own or another school, 40.5% in FE or sixth form provision, 8.9% in work-based learning/employment with training).

10. Entry to Employment (E2E) provision is delivered by four local providers offering a total of 60 places. In the last year, a consortium of providers has begun offering pre-E2E provision, a total of 75 places. For employment with training above E2E, including apprenticeships, young people also access a wide range of training providers in neighbouring authorities.

11. Educational and recreational leisure time activities, including youth work, are provided by the council's children's service in conjunction with a wide range of partners. The local authority provides a range of other support services to schools, some directly, some as commissioned work with voluntary sector partners and also through the Connexions Service.

12. The largest provider of part-time adult and community learning in B&NES is through City of Bath and Norton Radstock FE colleges. The local authority community learning service oversees the community learning strategy and provides engagement activities in identified areas of high deprivation as a first step towards a return to learning. It also works closely with early years and extended services to deliver family learning.

13. There is a learning partnership which includes representation from both FE colleges, 14–19 partners, economic development, adult services, employers and voluntary and community sector organisations.

14. Primary care is provided by the Bath and North East Somerset Primary Care Trust (BANES PCT) and acute hospital services are provided by the Royal United Hospital Bath NHS Trust. Specialist CAMHS are provided by BANES PCT. The Divisional Director for Child Health is part of the senior leadership team of the council children's service under a section 28A agreement.

15. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) comprises core and associate members with a full range of statutory and voluntary sector partners engaged in the work of the board. All partners are formally signed up to the board, its terms of reference, three year strategic plan and current business plan (2008–09) work programme. Partners are fully engaged in the work of the LSCB sub groups (training and quality assurance) and the five lead groups for the staying safe aims.

16. A full range of voluntary and statutory partners were engaged in the work of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and the subsequent Children's Trust Executive Board and Local Area Partnership Steering Groups.

17. There are no young offender institutions in the council area.

Main findings

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

- Children are safeguarded and protected well by all agencies working together effectively to identify and respond to need. The area has significantly but recently improved its performance in terms of volume and timeliness of core assessments and has rigorous management processes in place to ensure that this improvement is sustained. The LSCB is effective and providing good leadership.
- There is a strong commitment by the council and its partners to maximise the life chances of all looked after children and young people. Good work ensures that care is used only when necessary and then a wide range of effective specialist services are available to each looked after child. A small number of looked after children are too regularly committing offences and accommodation for care leavers remains an issue although it is now correctly a priority for the council to address and one of the 10 'pledges' made by the council to looked after children.
- Good collaborative working arrangements ensure that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have their needs identified early. A range of specialist services are available to support them in reaching their social and educational potential and outcomes are generally good. Too many incidents involving children and young people in special schools led to fixed-term exclusions, although major progress has been achieved in reducing permanent exclusions. Health care needs are also met well through a range of flexible and timely multi-disciplinary services. However, the timely provision of wheelchairs remains a problem although it is an issue that has been recognised and is being addressed.
- Increasingly effective strategic arrangements within children's services are ensuring that services are planned and delivered appropriately to ensure good outcomes for children and young people from Black and minority ethnic groups. However, until recently, the corporate council's focus upon equality and diversity issues had been insufficient and this had held back progress across the area.
- Service management across the partnership is good and the potential to improve is also good. The transformation of services to form an integrated children's directorate is complete and partners work together effectively and well. The ambition of the partnership, their priorities and their capacity to meet them are all good. Although

performance management structures are good at the higher levels of the organisation, understanding is not so firmly embedded among some front-line staff in social care.

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 for the successful dissemination of the findings of this report to children and young people in the area
- improve the volume and timeliness of core assessments
- ensure that no care leaver or vulnerable teenage parent is in unsuitable accommodation.

For action over the next six months

- The council's overarching strategy on equalities should ensure that there is systematic data collection and evaluation.
- Partners should ensure that unaccompanied asylum seeking minors have access to the full range of specialist services to enable informed plans to be made.
- The council should reduce the numbers of days lost due to temporary exclusions by pupils in special schools.

For action in the longer term

- The council and its partners should expand the opportunities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to play, relax and develop social skills during holiday periods.

Equality and diversity

19. At a corporate level within the council, diversity and equalities have not, until recently, been explicitly focused upon or prioritised, although there is a clear commitment to doing so contained within the community strategy and in the Local Area Agreement 2007-2010. In addition, the council's Corporate Equalities Group, which comprises senior officers of the council, has not met regularly until the last year, which in part explains the slow progress. The council has attained Level 2 of the Local Government Equalities Standard, which is not as high as the best performing councils.

20. Within children's services, partners have developed a greater strategic focus on the equality and diversity agenda and have created an Children's Service Equalities Action Group (CSEAG) that is chaired by a member of the directorate's leadership team. This body is charged with continuing to deliver the equality and diversity-related priorities that are set out in the Children's Services Plan, supporting the range of practice-based initiatives that already exist and developing others as the need is identified. It is a group that quite properly will continue to develop its role as a driver of improved outcomes for all sections of the community by supporting improved training and workforce development, championing equalities awareness across the partnership, and supporting the children's service in creating solutions to service-specific issues. It will also continue to act as a critical friend to the service as it progresses in this area.

21. Notwithstanding the relatively recent strategic developments set out above, children and young people have benefited from existing practices that they have described as being sensitive to their backgrounds and personal situations and focused upon their needs. These services have tended to be directed at traditional needs such as the eradication of racist and oppressive attitudes and behaviours and the educational progress and attainment of children from Black and minority ethnic communities. Outcomes for Black and minority ethnic children who are looked after and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are generally positive. There is no predominant ethnic group in the county but evidence suggests that children and young people of mixed racial heritage are overrepresented in the care, youth offending and drug and alcohol treatment systems. Work to address these issues has begun as a result of the alignment of the Children's Service Outcomes Improvement Group, chaired by the Director of Children's Services, with CSEAG. This is an intentional development to ensure that the equality and diversity agenda is kept under the high profile 'outcome spotlight' as part of a drive to achieve continuous improvement.

Safeguarding



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Effective multi-agency work to provide early intervention and support to families through a range of settings.</p> <p>Support to families and children experiencing domestic violence is of a high quality and targeted to need.</p> <p>The work of the 117 Project to support families whose children are on the edge of care.</p> <p>Well-established and effective LSCB.</p> <p>The work to tackle bullying in schools.</p> <p>The implementation of the common assessment framework is timely, well monitored and valued by partner agencies.</p> <p>Teenage pregnancy rates are on course to meet government targets in 2010.</p> <p>Low staff turnover and high staff morale.</p>	<p>Better use should be made of core assessments and their timeliness needs to be improved.</p> <p>A lack of awareness of the written eligibility criteria.</p> <p>The lack of available secure and suitable accommodation for teenage parents.</p>

23. Most children and young people feel safe in school and in their local community. In the Tellus survey in 2007, 82% of children reported feeling safe in their local area, against a national average of 74%. The 2007 APA judged performance to be good and this continues to be the case. Outcomes for children are good. The number of children with child protection plans is in line with similar councils and below the national average. The number of new cases where a child protection plan exists is lower than statistical neighbours and the national average indicating good and appropriate early intervention. Re-registration rates are lower than in similar authorities and the national average.

24. Parents and carers receive good advice from partner agencies about positive parenting and risks. A safe parenting handbook is available and healthy lifestyles are promoted well. There is good access to, and uptake of, child health developmental checks, health advice, speech and language, physiotherapy and occupational therapy services. Access to specialist health professionals and the CAMHS is good and waiting times for services are generally low with plans already in place for further improvement. The area is on target to meet government objectives in relation to teenage pregnancy. The area is working closely with schools to deliver effective advice to young people through the school nursing service. However, housing for vulnerable teenage mothers is inadequate and too much use is made of temporary or bed and breakfast accommodation.

25. All children subject to a child protection plan have a qualified social worker and individual plans are reviewed on time. The proportion of initial assessments completed within timescales is the same as similar authorities and the national average. Agencies work together effectively to support and monitor children and their families following successful implementation and closure of child protection plans. The numbers of children from minority ethnic backgrounds in the area are low and there are similarly low numbers subject to child protection plans. Children and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds are accessing preventative services illustrated by the numbers of children and families who have undertaken the common assessment process.

26. The number of core assessments undertaken and completed on time has been low. Effective and sustainable action is, however, being taken to improve the rate by the creation of extra posts funded by the Children's Workforce Development Council and rigorous monitoring by managers. Completion rates have also been targeted for improvement and there is recent evidence of significant progress. For example, between January and March of this year the number of assessments completed on time by the referral and assessment team rose from 58% to 83%.

27. Despite the historically low number of core assessments, children and young people subject to formal child protection arrangements and those identified as children in need have continued to receive a good service. Needs are identified in a range of different ways and have led to good quality, well-recorded, and often multi-disciplinary reports that have simply failed to use the established core assessment methodology. Good efforts are made to see children and young people on their own, and careful attention is paid to their views in reports. Plans are clear with specific targets and review mechanisms are thorough and effective.

28. Preventative services are good and agencies share information well. Information sharing protocols are up-to-date and familiar to staff. Inter-agency protocols are clear and easy to use. Effective packages of support are provided to families and young carers through children's centres, the voluntary sector and local community trained parents, for example through the Early

Relationships Project and Mellow Parenting. The support provided has been effective in narrowing the gap between the lowest performing children and their peers by over six percentage points and is one of the most successful outcomes for the region.

29. Good work with young people on the edge of care has prevented many children and young people from becoming looked after. One such service, the 117 Project, which provides immediate support to children and families at a point of potential breakdown, was established following a needs analysis. Of the 214 children referred to the project in 2006–07, only 18 were subsequently looked after and three of those were successfully returned home.

30. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) has been introduced effectively across the area, initially in areas of highest need, before being rolled out across the area, and a strong culture of multi-agency working has been established. At present, 156 common assessments have been started or undertaken reflecting the fact that 550 staff have been trained. Partner agencies talk positively of its use in a variety of settings and there was clear evidence of CAFs leading to effective early interventions and co-ordinated services being provided.

31. Agencies work well together to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect. Understanding of child protection is good and partnership working is evident ensuring a good and prompt response when child protection concerns are identified. Families are receiving a range of good quality support packages at an early stage and practitioners in partner agencies have confidence in the referral and assessment team. Social care duty arrangements are safe, with effective management scrutiny of child protection referrals. Referral rates are comparatively low and re-referral data is consistently similar to statistical neighbours. Written thresholds are in place, although front-line staff and managers across the partnership are not sufficiently familiar with them. The out-of-hours service is satisfactory and communication with day time services is good.

32. The implementation of the integrated children's system has created some minor difficulties during the migration process from paper-based to electronic recording but steps have been taken to mitigate the effects. Practitioners have good access to up-to-date multi-agency child protection procedures and inter-agency training and are regularly supervised. These may be key factors in creditably reducing staff turnover to less than 4% per annum and maintaining high staff morale. Files are audited, although the council recognises that it needs to ensure that all relevant findings are systematically recorded on files.

33. Early years settings and schools provide safe environments for children and young people and most children report they feel safe in school and in their local community. Children and young people have, appropriately, been very involved in developing the effective anti-bullying strategy that has been, and is continuing to be, a high priority of the LSCB. Children report that bullying and

harassment is dealt with well and reported incidents are low. The area has implemented a peer mentoring scheme in some schools and the 'friends' scheme for some young children and a voluntary organisation offers support and counselling to most secondary-aged children. Children's complaints are listened to and there have been positive changes to service provision in response to some. For instance, the way young people are received in one of the children's care buildings has been modified following some complaints.

34. There are good and robust arrangements for tracking children missing from care and education. Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) are well established and there is a good relationship between MAPPA and the child protection processes. A 'pan Avon' child death panel has been set up meeting government guidelines and mechanisms exist for lessons learnt from this panel to impact on practice in the area through the work of the LSCB.

35. The well-established LSCB has an appropriate membership including the voluntary sector and provides effective strategic direction on safeguarding matters. It has a clear focus on making safeguarding everyone's business and has succeeded in achieving this. Good work has taken place to ensure that the action plan from a recent serious case review, rated by the Commission for Social Care Inspection as good, is implemented to good effect. The LSCB and the Safer and Stronger Communities Partnership have undertaken some highly effective work in relation to domestic violence and abuse, particularly in relation to children with child protection plans and the police have adopted a zero tolerance approach to perpetrators of such acts and their notification procedures when children are involved are prompt.

36. Safe recruitment practices are good and underpinned by a comprehensive policy that has resulted in the area exceeding statutory requirements in relation to Criminal Records Bureau checking. The management of allegations against professionals suspected of abusing children is good, with sound arrangements in place to separate criminal investigation and personnel/disciplinary processes without compromising either.

Looked after children and young people

Inadequate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adequate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Outstanding	<input type="checkbox"/>
------------	--------------------------	----------	--------------------------	------	-------------------------------------	-------------	--------------------------

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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>The most recent Ofsted inspection of fostering services judged them to be outstanding.</p> <p>Partnership working and shared responsibility.</p> <p>Personalised focus in providing support.</p> <p>The proportion of children in foster care or adopted.</p> <p>The fostering service.</p> <p>Effective health provision with positive outcomes.</p> <p>Participation by looked after children and young people.</p> <p>Effective advocacy support.</p> <p>Education support and coordination.</p>	<p>Offending rates.</p> <p>Accommodation provision for care leavers.</p> <p>No robust analysis of the progress made by looked after children in relation to their potential or predicted grades, or the progress made by all looked after children in local schools.</p>

38. There is a strong commitment by the council as a corporate parent to securing the best for children and young people who are looked after. This is evidenced by improving performance against national and local comparators in most areas and is reflected in the 10 corporate pledges which were endorsed by elected members in May 2008. Partnership working, shared responsibility and a relentless personalised focus on outcomes for each looked after child, underpin this commitment. Services work well together in providing a range of preventative, targeted and intensive support to keep the proportion of looked after children and young people broadly in line with local comparators and well below the national average. Good preventative services help prevent children becoming looked after.

39. There is evidence of good practice in that there are over 90% of children and young people in foster care or placed for adoption, which is higher than regional and national averages. Adoption numbers are high and very good use is made of placements with family and friends, with very good use of special guardianship when it is appropriate to do so. Needs are generally met within or close to the local community. This also reflects good practice in implementing government guidelines. There are low numbers of children and young people placed in residential settings. Placement stability performance is improving, with long-term placement rising further in the current year to bring the authority in line with comparators. Short-term stability is above local and national averages. All looked after children have a qualified social worker. Looked after children

are placed in safe settings which are at least compliant with, and often exceed, national minimum standards.

40. The commissioning strategy and related procedures are robust. Placement decisions are flexible to meet individual needs. Independent fostering agencies are used if the particular needs of a young person cannot be met by in-house carers, and this is particularly the case for some teenagers. The fostering services inspection in December 2007 judged overall provision to be outstanding and available evidence indicates that the adoption service, last inspected in 2004 and judged to be providing an extremely good standard of practice, is also effective. Improvements have been made in care planning decisions to go for adoption and current performance is at 100%. Carers and adopters value the comprehensive range of training, support, guidance and information they receive from the authority. Performance and quality assurance monitoring by independent reviewing officers and senior managers is good. When poor or variable performance is identified, targeted action usually leads to improvement. For example, there has been an improvement in the timeliness of reviews, from comparatively low performance of 75% in 2006–07 to 87% in the year to date, which is above average against available comparator information.

41. Valued health staff are in post, including a dedicated nurse and consultant paediatrician, and other health professionals from CAMHS, school nursing, dental care and paediatrics. They are effective in ensuring that performance in the number of dental checks and health assessments, at 88%, is higher than similar authorities and the national average. A particular strength of health support is the comprehensive and flexible nature of assessments for those aged over 11 years. Mobile phone contact is effective at engaging young people. Effective health promotion work is undertaken by the nurse as part of the comprehensive work she undertakes with young people. For instance, 'Clinic in the Box' enables contraceptive service to be provided to them, and there are very low numbers of teenage pregnancies. Reported incidence of substance misuse is exceptionally low and is well below the national average. CAMHS has a dedicated and efficient service, 'LOCATE', to meet the needs of looked after children and their carers and adopters. Waiting lists have been reduced and approximately 40 looked after children are currently receiving a good service. In addition, 'therapeutic' foster carers offer specialised care to some looked after children with additional needs. This has helped reduce the need for residential placements.

42. The participation of children and young people in their reviews is rising and the quality of their contributions has improved and is now generally good. In 2006–07, it was above average at 89% and has risen further in the current year to 96%. Access to a commissioned and effective advocacy service, Shout Out, is actively encouraged, and 100 looked after children or care leavers used the service in the past 12 months. With support from Shout Out, young people produce a regular magazine, *Small Issue*, for those who are looked after. They have also produced an excellent Looked After Children Pack to enable those

coming into care to understand what is involved and how to access services. The views of 12 young people have been used by Shout Out to make recommendations for further improvements, such as to celebrate achievements. Plans are in place to address this through the reinstatement of an annual achievement ceremony for looked after children.

43. Offending rates by looked after young people in relation to their local peers have generally been above average with the exception of 2006–07 when they were broadly in line with regional and national comparators. However, available data indicates a rise again in the current year despite a number of preventative initiatives that are in place. However, the same local data shows that the numbers of looked after children involved in offending are small and total less than 10 in each of the last two years.

44. Early assessments of most of those coming into care are carried out by an educational psychologist who identifies their potential, strengths and difficulties; this helps inform decisions about provision. Effective personal education plans are completed for all those of school age and those aged three and four years. These regularly reviewed plans are central in bringing professionals, including carers, together, to track progress and clarify any additional support needs. They have been particularly beneficial at transition times. Designated teachers and other school staff provide good individualised support for looked after children irrespective of their placing local authority. A well-regarded education coordinator for the education of looked after children employs effective strategies and helps to improve their education outcomes. When required, this triggers other beneficial learning and behaviour support. For instance, the 'Letter Box Club' enables some pupils in Years 3 and 5 to receive a parcel of educational material and activity packs directly in their homes. The percentage of those who missed 25 or more days of school, which had been in line with the national average, has improved in the 2006/07 academic year to 6% and this compares well against the national picture.

45. The percentage of looked after young people who sat at least one GCSE or equivalent examination was, at 42%, well below the national average for the 2005/06 academic year. Unvalidated 2007 data indicates that this has risen to 92%. Similar improvement is also reflected in the percentage of those achieving five or more higher GCSE grades, which improved from 15% to 38%. There has been a similar rate of improvement in the percentage of care leavers attaining GCSEs. However, despite this significant improvement in attainment, it still compares unfavourably with national averages for all children. The percentage of care leavers in education, employment or training has also risen from 89% in 2006/07 to 96% in the current year, which is above the national average.

46. Education attainment varies from year to year, partly due to small cohorts and their particular needs and potential. Reporting on attainment is regular and the progress made by individual children and young people is tracked carefully by school staff and the Children's Service's Officer Improvement Group. However, regular reporting does not yet include robust analysis of the progress

made by looked after children in relation to their potential or predicted grades, or the progress made by all looked after children in local schools. Developments are underway to rectify this.

47. All care leavers have pathway plans and allocated personal advisers, and these provide a range of guidance and information about entitlements and access to support. Further improvements could be made in ensuring a smooth handover and continuity between personal education and pathway planning and clarifying the respective roles of key professionals in each young person's plan.

48. The percentage of care leavers living in suitable accommodation dipped in 2006–07 to 80%. This was below average and was the lowest in the region. However, this represents a small number because of the size of the cohort. In the current year it has risen again to 89%. While the supported lodgings scheme is developing well, there is still a lack of suitable accommodation for some care leavers, with temporary bed and breakfast accommodation occasionally in use. The broad issue of housing, including the desire to phase out the use of bed and breakfast, has rightly been recognised as a priority area and has been included in one of the council's 10 pledges.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



49. **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>Strong partnership working and a clear commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.</p> <p>Good multi-agency working to support children and young people with complex needs.</p> <p>Early detection through children's centres, early years settings and primary schools.</p>	<p>Wheelchair service which is not sufficiently responsive to the needs of children.</p> <p>Insufficient opportunities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to play, relax and develop social skills during holiday periods.</p> <p>High temporary exclusion rates in special schools.</p>

<p>Coherent approach to meeting the needs of children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders.</p> <p>Well thought out and integrated approach to behaviour management.</p> <p>Clear focus on improving opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to achieve economic well-being.</p> <p>Good educational outcomes.</p> <p>Good support for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to express their views and make a positive contribution.</p>	
---	--

50. Collaborative working across the area is strong and partners are committed to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Joint working between health services and the local authority's children's services is particularly strong and there are clear procedures for accessing health and other services. Clear roles have been established for health visitors and school nurses in both the detection of need and the provision of support. The diagnosis and provision of multi-agency support for young children with complex needs is timely and these children and their families are supported well as they move into early years settings, schools or in and out of hospital.

51. Partners are clearly focused on early identification of learning difficulties, disabilities or slow development, and collaborative working through children's centres, early years settings and primary schools is very effective in ensuring early intervention. The local emphasis on early detection is also effective in identifying young children showing signs of autistic spectrum disorders and behavioural problems. A coherent approach has been developed to meeting the needs of these pupils in mainstream and special schools. Schools work well together and special schools provide good support and training to help mainstream schools meet the individual needs of children and young people with autistic spectrum disorders.

52. Specialist health services for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are mostly good. Children have good access to speech and language therapy services. There is a well thought out approach to early identification of slow speech and language development and good support for parents and staff in different settings. The service is appropriately configured with specialist speech and language therapists focusing on those with higher level needs. However, some parents still have concerns that support is not always provided by speech and language specialists. Prioritisation of services has resulted in

insufficient specialist speech and language therapy support in one special school, although this is being addressed through additional specialist staffing. There is specialist, comprehensive CAMHS provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The backlog of cases has been cleared and waiting times are mostly good. Response is particularly prompt where need is greatest. A good multi-agency approach has been established and is providing innovative emotional and relationship education to children and young people as well as to staff, parents and carers. Occupational therapy support is mostly accessible and timely, although the wheelchair service is not sufficiently responsive to the needs of children and despite some improvement waiting times are still too long. Partners are aware of these shortcomings and were working on improvements at the time of the inspection.

53. The implementation of the CAF is supported well by staff from different agencies and it is already proving effective in identifying and addressing the need of groups of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff from the children with disabilities social care team and from different services work together well and respond effectively to the individual needs of children, young people and their families. Easily accessible information is available about the services, provided in paper and electronic forms via the internet and a detailed directory which is updated annually. Only a small minority of the parents who spoke to inspectors have difficulties at times in finding the information they need. Children and young people are encouraged and supported well to contribute to their reviews and voice their views at other times. Advocacy services are accessible and supportive should young people, parents or carers feel dissatisfied or require help with the services they receive or wish to receive.

54. There is a good range of options for respite care, with sufficient volume to meet local needs. The council is careful in ensuring appropriate support for families and the care provided is reviewed twice annually by independent reviewers. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with good opportunities to play, relax and develop social skills, both through specialist and mainstream settings which are inclusive in their practice. The council is exploring options for increasing the time for which these opportunities are offered during school holiday periods. Use of direct payments is effective in helping those over the age of 16 develop independence. Families of younger age groups choose not to take up the option. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are encouraged well to make a positive contribution to their local communities and to the development of services. Pupils were, for example, very active in the design of Three Ways School.

55. Procedures for preparing statutory assessments of special educational needs are appropriately implemented. The proportion of statements completed within 18 weeks is in line with similar authorities, as is the rate of placements in mainstream schools. Schools and settings are inclusive in their practice and mainstream schools are supported well by special schools in accommodating

children and young people with increasingly complex needs. Access to education psychology services is timely with good targeting of expertise to areas of greatest need. A well thought out approach to behaviour management has been introduced recently through the integrated specialist behaviour service and has already had major impact on exclusions in mainstream schools. Permanent exclusions have almost been eliminated across the area. Incidents leading to temporary exclusions from special schools remain high due partly to placement of mainstream pupils with behavioural difficulties, who are at risk of permanent exclusion, for short periods at a special school prior to their planned reintegration into mainstream schools. However the number and percentages of pupils receiving fixed term exclusions in special schools are in line with comparators.

56. Outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are monitored through a variety of approaches. Most children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those from Black and minority ethnic communities, make good progress and achieve well. Progress of pupils working within the national curriculum levels in mainstream schools is monitored well by individual schools and the council centrally. The use of small measures of improvement to compare the performance of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities across schools locally and with similar children nationally is at an early stage of development.

57. Improving transition to adult services has been a local priority for partners. Clear procedures are in place for reviewing individual needs, for preparing transition plans and for ensuring continuity of support across agencies. A member of staff located within adult social care services works specifically with young people prior to transition to ensure continuity. Procedures for assessing the individual needs of 14–16 year olds with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as part of transition planning have been strengthened and partners are mindful of the need to ensure appropriate support not only for those young people who are subject to statutory statements of educational need but also those designated as School Action Plus. The range of post-16 education and training opportunities available locally for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in mainstream, special schools and colleges has increased over the last three years and is now good. A comprehensive analysis of needs has been commissioned to ensure provision meets future demand across the area. The information, advice and guidance available for young people, parents and carers is good with a clear focus on the needs of individual young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Opportunities for young people to live in supported accommodation are currently limited.

Other issues identified for further investigation

The impact of the partners' strategy in addressing the needs and well-being of children and young people from a black and minority ethnic background

58. The impact of the partners' strategy in addressing the needs and well-being of children and young people from a black and minority ethnic background is adequate.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good individual service on a case-by-case basis.</p> <p>Good service to children and young people from a Black and minority ethnic background with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.</p> <p>Good framework for inclusion under children's service equalities action group.</p> <p>Good levels of support for black and minority ethnic children and young people in care to meet their needs.</p>	<p>Lack of robust recording of data on ethnicity used to plan services.</p> <p>Training on meeting needs of asylum seekers.</p> <p>Limited information on children's services to Black and minority ethnic groups.</p>

59. The Black and minority ethnic population in B&NES is numerically small, not homogenous and those groups that can be identified are not disproportionately represented in the most deprived communities of the area. The 2001 census shows the adult Black and minority ethnic population to be 2.8% and children 7.88%. Agencies collecting data from other sources contend that the population is larger and growing with, for example, a particularly significant population from eastern European countries not being properly represented in statistics, instead being classified simply, and unhelpfully in terms of service development, as White Other. The recording of ethnicity is variable, which complicates needs assessment and service planning. For example, there is 100% compliance with the recording requirements of the CAF but conversely 22% of referrals show that ethnicity is either 'declined' or 'not given'. There is no predominant ethnic group in the area but the number of children of mixed racial heritage is comparatively high.

60. The complexity of providing services to Black and minority ethnic groups is compounded by the council having no explicit strategic approach to equality and diversity. Against this background children's services has historically taken a largely pragmatic approach in dealing with issues of diversity and equality but correctly this approach has recently become more strategic and consultative so

that progress can be made from Level 2 of the Race Equality Standard. Level 2 is below the best performing local authorities. Accordingly, an increasingly effective CSEAG is addressing all areas of discrimination, disability, racism and sexual orientation under the umbrella of the corporate equalities group to ensure compliance with specific duties and the development of knowledge and expertise across the partnership. Despite the strategic difficulties the area has experienced, children from Black and minority ethnic groups are generally receiving a good and responsive service, with positive outcomes being achieved. This finding was endorsed by examples of work documented in case files and from accounts of service users' experiences.

61. A breakdown of Black and minority ethnic groups in the children's services shows that of 156 children assessed under the CAF, 19 are from Black and minority ethnic groups – a figure that illustrates that children and young people from these groups are accessing services. Black and minority ethnic children are under-represented amongst those with a child protection plan, with only five having plans, but there is an over-representation in the children in need and in care categories. There are currently two unaccompanied asylum seekers. There is no predominant minority ethnic group in the area but the number of children of mixed racial heritage is above average, both in the children in care and youth offending population. Of the 119 children in care, 19 are from a Black and minority ethnic background and eight of those are of mixed racial heritage.

62. The 2006 APA highlights raising the attainment of Black and minority ethnic pupils as an area for development and work has begun to address this in schools. However, identification of the needs of such groups over the whole spectrum of universal services is in the early stages of development. For example, the work of the Black and minority ethnic workers group, a corporately driven group sponsored by the Director of Children's Services, is helping to build knowledge across the council and the partnership and is becoming influential in policy formulation and in shaping the area's thinking about how Black and minority ethnic groups can participate in service development.

63. There is limited local information on the specific health needs of Black and minority ethnic groups but GP services are being accessed appropriately and there are good individual responses to children presenting with specific health needs. Inter-agency working is good. Health assessments of Black and minority ethnic children in care are timely and thorough and a good service is provided to Black and minority ethnic children with disabilities. Specific consultation by the PCT around the 'Gold' project has allowed the voices of families whose children have a disability to be heard. Black and minority ethnic families who had children with learning difficulties were interviewed specifically to get their views about how their children's needs were met. Families reported high levels of satisfaction but had some lack of knowledge about service provision and how to access information about services. Monitoring of data in Drugs Action Team treatment centres showed an over-representation of young people of mixed racial background in the treatment population. Work to identify the needs of

this specific group in all service areas is required to ensure that they receive an equitable service.

64. Improved educational attainment by Black and minority ethnic children is a local target and specific work is being undertaken to achieve this goal. Figures for children in schools show large variations in the size of the Black and minority ethnic pupil populations that range from 0% in rural areas to 25% in some primaries and 2.7% to 17.4% in secondary schools. There are also 27 Traveller, Roma and Gypsy families whose needs are satisfactorily met through arrangements with the Avon Consortium Travellers Education Service (ACTES). The level of attendance of Black and minority ethnic pupils is generally in line with comparators and only seven of the 79 children missing from education are from Black and minority ethnic groups. 5.5% of children with statements of special educational need are from Black and minority ethnic communities.

65. The variation in pupil populations creates difficulties in planning for children and not surprisingly schools with higher populations have developed greater levels of skill in working with and understanding the needs of their pupils from Black and minority ethnic groups. The council has recognised the challenge of ensuring that pupils are not disadvantaged by their race or ethnicity and has developed a range of additional support. For example, a good start has been made by the Ethnic Minority and Achievement Service (EMAS) in developing a self-evaluation toolkit for use with vulnerable groups and there has been good work undertaken by the Black Families Education Support Group in development of supplementary education and network of mentors from Black and minority ethnic groups to support young people. Effective training and guidance provided to families and a small number of schools by the Support Against Racist Incidents (SARI) organisation. The voluntary agency STAR works well in early years settings to provide an inclusive environment for under-fives by use of multicultural books and materials. Personal, social and health education programmes include effective work on difference and diversity and the 'Show Racism a Red Card' programme is increasingly used with significant impact.

66. Good placement matches are made for children and young people from Black and minority ethnic groups who are also looked after and their levels of attainment are improving. There are no service level agreements with fostering groups that specifically provide for Black and minority ethnic children but carers reported good levels of support and advice from the council. The small number of children who cannot be placed with in-house providers are found placements on a case-by-case basis through independent fostering agencies.

67. The number of young people seeking asylum in the area is small, usually one or two a year. Consequently, opportunities for developing expertise in this highly specialised area are few. Access to relevant local information is limited and liaison with services located in neighbouring authority areas is necessary to provide a service, including interpretation, to asylum seekers.

68. Black and minority ethnic young people, particularly those of mixed heritage, first come to the attention of the youth offending service without first being identified as in need of the range of preventative services run by the Youth Offending Team. Although numbers are small, they represent 14% (42) of the 306 young people in the youth justice system. There is some youth club provision for Black and minority ethnic young people, including a music project and holiday workshops. The recorded number of young people not in education, employment or training in the county is lower than the average for the UK; Connexions provide a good access point to services and Black and minority ethnic groups represented 16.7% of those who did so.

Service management



Capacity to improve



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good outcomes for children and young people, including those who are looked after.</p> <p>Clear strategic vision, ambitions and prioritisation.</p> <p>Effective capacity, leadership and management.</p> <p>Effective partnership working for children and young people, built on good joint working relationships.</p> <p>Good engagement with children, young people, parents and carers.</p>	<p>Cannot yet demonstrate equality and diversity in all services or a full understanding of the needs of Black and minority ethnic communities.</p> <p>Awareness of service eligibility criteria in children's social work is low, and the criteria are not clear.</p> <p>Performance monitoring of some service delivery is not yet fully effective.</p>

70. The management of services for children and young people in B&NES is good. Outcomes for children and young people, including those who are looked after, are good. A new director came in to post two years ago and in this time the improvement in service management, and in delivering improved services to all sections of the community, has been strong. Service transformation is complete within children's services and partnership working across council services is good and set to improve further as locality-based working becomes fully established through new Children's Trust arrangements. Partnerships between the council, police, schools and colleges, voluntary sector and health services are strong, and work to deliver even closer integration with the PCT is progressing well. Both leadership and management are effective and the level of trust and respect across partners is strong.

71. Ambitions for children and young people in B&NES are good. The council's high aspirations for children and young people are clearly stated within its priority 'Better lives for young people'. Services for children and young people are underpinned by a clear, shared strategic vision and ambition in the recently reviewed and improved Children and Young People's Plan. This includes shared objectives and challenging but realistic targets based on need and consultation with partners, parents, carers, children and young people. Well thought out new Children's Trust arrangements and locality working are now moving forward with good support and engagement from all. A very ambitious schools reorganisation programme is underway and is being delivered in a supportive and coherent manner. This aims not only to improve educational outcomes and facilities, but also to rebalance school rolls and surplus places across the area. The council is investing in school buildings and has a clear aim for excellent facilities for all children and teachers. This is evident in the award winning new Three Ways School project to replace three smaller special schools. This ambitious project, which was completed within time and budget, was designed and built in full consultation with stakeholders, including parents and children.

72. Consultation, and engagement, with children and young people and stakeholders is good in most respects. An active children and young people's participation network has adopted appropriate strategies, including a looked after children participation strategy. The area makes effective use of this and a wide range of consultation, for example to inform the 2007 review of the Children and Young People's Plan. Strategy, plans and action are informed by consultation, for example the CAMHS strategy, LOCATE (looked after children's CAMHS service), Shout Out (a children's rights and advocacy service) and the local parenting strategy are all clearly based on effective multi-agency, user and stakeholder consultation. The local DAFBY (Democratic Action for B&NES Youth) is a good example of the active participation of young people in shaping services. The commitment to include all young people is strong. However, the partnership recognises that, although some effective consultation has taken place with Black and minority ethnic communities, there is still more to do to better understand their needs.

73. Prioritisation is good. The priorities for children and young people are clear in the Children and Young People's Plan and in service plans. These reflect both local needs and the Every Child Matters agenda. Progress in achieving good and improved outcomes in priority areas is strong. This includes not only improving educational outcomes for children, including those who are looked after, but also a clear and effective focus on ensuring the stability of looked after children and the quality of adoption and fostering services. Prioritisation is also evident in balancing financial resources across services. The council is not afraid of tackling difficult issues to meet its priorities for children and young people. This is evident, for example, in the restructuring of the Youth Service, in its refocusing of home to school transport and in addressing school closures, mergers and surplus places.

74. Although effective prioritisation has led to good outcomes, the council is aware that some areas remain to be addressed. Equality and diversity is not prioritised corporately by the council or sufficiently within the children's services directorate. The council has achieved only Level 2 of the Equalities Standard for Local Government and equality impact statements are not completed for all children's service areas. As a result it cannot yet demonstrate equality and diversity in all services or in meeting the needs of all diverse groups. Priorities for the restructured Youth Service are not yet confirmed and understanding among staff of service eligibility criteria in children's social work is low.

75. Capacity to deliver the ambitions is good. Financial management is good and financial and people capacity is used effectively. There is clear evidence of increased capacity being used effectively at management and service delivery level through close partnership working, joint commissioning and aligned budgets and some pooled budgets; for example the council and the PCT operate a £3.5m pooled budget for joint area placements. The resources allocated to B&NES schools, children and children in need are in line with similar authorities. Partners demonstrate good commitment to multi-agency preventative work through the allocation of resources and a robust approach to the commissioning of services. Value for money of children's services is good. Two commissioning officers are employed to assist social workers in taking a commissioning approach to placement. This helps assure quality of service and value for money. A joint commissioning strategy for looked after children has, for example, resulted in savings of £150,000 in year and improved quality of placements at the same time. The area has been awarded £2.5m Government Pathfinder funding to extend play opportunities and this is increasing capacity in areas such as parks and play rangers. Services are aware of value for money through a rolling programme of reviews to assure value. For example, by refocusing criteria and improving efficiency of home to school transport costs, and in bringing the cost of youth service management to a level in line with other councils with no negative impact on service delivery.

76. The area benefits from good councillor and service leadership from managers across the partnership. Staff feel supported and are enthusiastic and committed to improving services and partners are positive about the leadership

and its capacity to deliver. Managers are handling change effectively to maintain and improve capacity, through flexible working and in piloting new ways of working supported by an additional £650,000 of Children's Workforce Development Council funding. The recruitment of workers is effective and staff turnover rates are appropriate and vacancies are filled. Capacity has been strengthened in children's social work through new social worker appointments and improved partnership working arrangements. Some staff, however, still feel stretched as new practices and preventative actions become embedded. Short and medium-term strategic workforce planning is developing in schools and through the Children's Trust in a draft 2007–12 workforce strategy. A workforce vision and plan to ensure staff capacity in the longer term is not yet developed.

77. Performance management across children's services is adequate. Performance management at the highest levels of the partnership and the council is good, for example the management of progress on the Local Authority Agreement and the national performance indicator data set, but some service delivery is not monitored effectively and some performance information lacks clarity. Performance monitoring procedures are not effective in the monitoring, audit and management oversight systems for children's social work and assessments. This is now being improved as a service priority. The council collects vast amounts of detailed and complex service data, in a variety of formats and from a mix of paper and ICT systems. This is not easy for managers and staff to understand and does not help in communicating a clear picture of performance and in taking action to address underperformance. This makes it more difficult to manage performance at a service delivery level.

78. There are good systems in place for the regular reporting of high level performance. The service makes effective use of the robust corporate system and high level performance management of children's services is sound through a good focus on national indicators and in using this to address performance issues. An improved staff appraisal system is embedded and individual performance is linked to service performance. Scrutiny reviews within children and young people's services are linked to priorities, are responsive to parents' petitions and contribute positively to improvement. Scrutiny, for example, played a major part in assuring the quality and impact of the council's work in schools' reorganisation. Shared performance management arrangements are emerging with partners through the local area agreement and integration of performance systems between the council and the PCT.

79. Capacity to improve further is good. The area has a good track record of delivering improvement and the rate of progress has been strong. This is evident in good and improved outcomes across the service, for example in improving educational attainment for all, including for the most vulnerable, improving school attendance and improving fostering services. Although this is a high achieving area, there is no sense of complacency. Partners work well together to add value and capacity to services for children and young people. A Director of Children's Services has been in post for almost two years and service transformation during this time has been positive. The service is well

placed to improve further. Integration of service delivery, particularly with schools and the PCT, is strong. Well thought out plans to further develop the Children's Trust and its management and governance arrangements, centred on locality-based working in three areas, are now progressing with clear support and commitment from all. Locality-based delivery of services, based on local need, is expected to be fully established within the next two years and partners are making good progress in a considered and planned incremental manner.

Annex A

MOST RECENTLY PUBLISHED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

Summary

Bath and North East Somerset Council consistently delivers services for children and young people at a good level in all respects. The developing integration and good cooperation between all children's services and other agencies are having a positive impact. As a result, there are clear indications of significant improvements in the achievement and well-being of children and young people. Standards are above those of similar authorities and well above national averages for most indicators. However, although this is a high achieving council, this masks the challenges it faces in areas of social deprivation. The council is proactive in tackling these challenges and there is growing evidence of success.

The full annual performance assessment can be found at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=3147&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa_2007_886.pdf

Annex B: Summary of the enhanced youth inspection report

Main findings

1. The quality of youth work provided by Bath and North East Somerset is good and the local authority adequately secures its provision. Young people enjoy taking part in activities, are learning a good range of social and practical skills and are proud of their attainment. Those who take part in decision-making bodies are making an impressive contribution to the community. Many staff respond well to the needs of young people and many use a good variety of approaches and resources to enable young people of differing interests and abilities to play an active part in youth work programmes. They make good use of local networks and partnerships to enrich and extend the opportunities available. The newly appointed management team has a very good grasp of the areas where improvement is needed and has done much in a short space of time to lift morale, improve efficiency and effectively manage a significant budget reduction. There are, however, some shortcomings. There is a small but significant proportion of inadequate practice. A few less experienced staff are poorly deployed and lack the confidence they need to effectively implement their ideas. The creative use of information and communications technology (ICT) and the promotion of positive race relations do not feature in programmes. The contribution of youth work to meeting the needs of vulnerable groups has not been determined and there is no strategy for equality and inclusion. A lack of clarity with regard to the service's core business and priorities coupled with the current high level of vacancies is having an impact on the service's capacity to meet all the expectations and demands placed upon it.

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	2
3	Leadership and management	2

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

Strengths

- Young people are developing a good range of skills and are proud of their achievements.
- The quality of practice is good overall with some that is outstanding.
- The service has established strong and effective operational partnerships.
- Staff are highly motivated and committed.
- Capable managers are providing strong and supportive leadership which is rapidly improving the service.

Areas for development

- Define more clearly the core business and priorities for youth work.
- Establish fully the new mechanisms to measure and monitor performance.
- Develop the involvement of young people in evaluation and quality assurance.
- Develop and implement strategies to promote equality and inclusion.
- Broaden the range of routes to accreditation.

Annex C

CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Outcomes for children and young people in Bath and North East Somerset are generally good and there is good potential to improve. This judgement endorses the findings of the 2007 annual performance assessment (APA) which stated that the council 'consistently delivers services for children and young people at a good level in all respects'.
2. Children and young people are safe, and enjoy and achieve in education. Looked after children have significantly improved their attainment at GCSE notwithstanding that cohorts are small and therefore rates are subject to significant year-on-year variability. However, progress and attainment at all stages of education are carefully monitored and planning through the good use of personal education plans is a particular strength. Good work is also being undertaken to improve the attainment of black and minority ethnic children and young people in response to an area for development highlighted in the 2007 APA. Early evidence about projects such as the Supplementary School is showing some positive impact from this work.
3. Children and young people are enabled to make a positive contribution and a range of strategies are in place to enable them to do so. A successful initiative of the Youth Service enables young people to make 'particularly impressive contributions to their communities' through their involvement and participation. Good work is also undertaken with looked after children in order to ensure that they are enabled to make a full contribution to all matters that affect them.
4. The contribution of services to improving outcomes for children and young people in relation to their ability to achieve economic well-being was described as good in the 2007 APA. The 2008 JAR noted further progress. The range of provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has continued to expand and diversify with a consequential improvement in uptake. The percentage of looked after children and care leavers in education, employment and training is high and exceeds the figure of comparators and is now at 96%. Although suitable housing remains a key issue for young people, particularly care leavers, it has been given significant priority by councillors in their role as corporate parents, who have made it one of the council's 10 pledges to looked after children.
5. The council and its partners have good safeguarding arrangements in place. Preventive work is increasingly effective and being strengthened as a result of the development of locally based services. Those who are referred receive good services, although there is a need to ensure that recent improvements to assessment are sustained. Children subject to child protection plans are case-managed well with good standards of work across the

partnership. Management oversight of practice is good, although auditing processes are not sufficiently rigorous.

6. Looked after children receive a good service from the council and its partners, and councillors have recently strengthened their corporate parenting role by specifying 10 pledges designed to maximise the life chances of all looked after children. High numbers of children live in foster care with carers who are supported well by a fostering service that was judged to be outstanding by a recent Ofsted inspection. Good numbers of children are also adopted.

7. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are benefiting from strong collaboration between services which combine effectively to identify and meet need. Diagnoses are made quickly and where necessary complex packages of care are made available. Effective services are in place to help children to make positive contributions. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well in education but too many experience fixed-term exclusions in special schools. Good opportunities are afforded to young people to achieve economic well-being.

8. Children and young people from black and minority ethnic groups benefit well from a range of services that have been made available and there is growing evidence to demonstrate that the children's services' increasingly strategic approach is further improving outcomes for young people. However, these developments have, until comparatively recently, been hindered by the absence of a concerted corporate approach to equality and diversity.

9. Service management is good across the children's service. Service transformation is complete and partnership working is good and strengthening further. Ambition, prioritisation and capacity are all good. Although performance management systems at a high level are effective they are not consistently embedded or fully understood and appreciated in all front-line services. Some performance information also lacks clarity which limits its effectiveness.

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 Bath and North East Somerset 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).