

Joint area review

City of York Children's Services Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

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

1. The most recent annual performance assessment (APA) for the City of York judged the council's children's services as outstanding and its capacity to improve as outstanding.
2. This report assesses the contribution of local services in ensuring the following for 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. There were no investigations in the joint area review beyond those outlined in paragraph 2 above.

Context

4. The City of York is a nationally prominent city with a strong historical heritage. It is one of the UK's most visited tourist centres and has become an increasingly important centre of academic excellence. Geographically, the York local authority boundary covers some 105 square miles, comprising the urban centre of York and a number of small rural villages. The city is the largest urban conurbation across the sub-region and has the highest population density. The total population is estimated at 191,800 with 41,663 aged between 0 and 19. This represents an increase of over 5% since 2001. The percentage of Black and minority ethnic groups in York is small at approximately 6%. This is increasing year-on-year with an expected rise to 10% in 2010. The largest ethnic category (other than White British) continues to be 'White other', which includes people of Turkish, Kurdish, Eastern European and Traveller/Gypsy origin. The city is relatively affluent, although there are significant pockets of deprivation with one designated super output area ranking in the most deprived 10% in England and a further four within the most disadvantaged 5%.
5. Children's care services are provided through approximately 90 full-time foster carers (incorporating mainstream and professional schemes). There is one six-bedded residential home within the city and one respite residential children's home providing short breaks for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are three family centres, two of which have now been relocated into integrated children's centres and seven field social work teams. There are 63 children on the child protection register and 167 children and young people who are looked after.

6. Pre-16 education comprises five independent schools, two designated children's centres, one nursery school, 54 primary schools, 10 secondary schools, two special schools, two pupil referral units and one 14–16 Skills Centre. Additional early years provision comprises 239 registered childminders, 41 private/voluntary day nurseries and 44 play groups.

7. Post-16 education and training is provided by four schools with sixth forms, one general further education college, one specialist agricultural college and the new 14–16 Skills Centre. There are two universities.

8. Entry to Employment (E2E) provision is commissioned by the local Learning and Skills Council and the main providers are York Training Centre, Yorkshire and Humber Training and Selby College (40 places in total). In addition to this, the 14–19 partnership supports a pre-E2E pilot for up to 20 learners.

9. Educational and recreational leisure time activities, including youth work and youth support services, are provided by the council's directorate of Learning, Culture and Children's Services. Connexions will form part of the newly integrated young people's service from April 2008.

10. Adult and community learning, including family learning, is provided by Learning, Culture and Children's Services as part of the Learning City partnership.

11. Primary care is provided by the North Yorkshire and York Primary Care Trust and acute hospital services are provided by York Hospitals Trust. Mental health services in York are commissioned by North Yorkshire and York Primary Care Trust and based at the Limetrees Centre, which offers the full range of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provision, including in-patient tier 4 provision and outreach provision.

12. Services to children and young people who are at risk of offending or have offended are provided through the City of York Youth Offending Team.

Main findings

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

- Safeguarding is outstanding. Children and young people live in a very safe environment. There are highly effective multi-agency partnership arrangements, with strong strategic leadership through a well-established Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). Early identification, referral and assessment processes are rigorous and ensure that interventions are prompt and that appropriate support is provided for children and families in need.

- Support for looked after children is outstanding. Health, education and emotional needs are met through access to comprehensive and high quality services from the council and its many partners. The views of looked after children and young people are actively sought and used diligently to shape and develop services. The council has a strong record of ensuring that all young people leaving school enter further education, employment or training. There are effective arrangements in place to support those young people leaving care, including help with housing and financial assistance.
- Provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is outstanding. Exemplary work is undertaken to ensure the early identification of need supported by a strong and inclusive range of provision across health, education and the voluntary sector. Pupils make good progress at school and there are excellent arrangements to support them through transition. Their voice and opinions are used frequently to inform the development and improvement of provision. There is good support to help young people's transition to adult life, particularly by encouraging independent travel and the provision of shared and independent housing.
- Service management is good with outstanding capacity to improve further. Strategic planning through the YorOK Board is strong and there is very clear commitment expressed through a transparent and realistic approach to social inclusion. Financial and performance management arrangements are good and management information is used effectively to monitor and review progress. Clear priorities are in place which focus strongly on closing the gap between the majority of children and the most vulnerable groups.

Grades

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

	Local services overall
Safeguarding	4
Looked after children	4
Learning difficulties and/or disabilities	4
Service management	3
Capacity to improve	4

Recommendations

For immediate action

The local partnership should:

- ensure that an appropriate way is found for the successful dissemination of the findings of this report to children and young people in the area
- ensure that agency representatives improve their attendance at child protection review conferences, particularly where de-registration is being considered.

For action over the next six months

The council and its strategic partners should:

- identify capacity to develop and commence implementation of the embryonic integrated children's workforce development strategy.

Equality and diversity

14. The local strategic partnership addresses equality and diversity issues effectively. Commitment to social inclusion by all partner agencies is robustly demonstrated through a rich and innovative tapestry of programmes and activities that sensitively target the most vulnerable children and their families. Very good attention is given to ensuring that Black and minority ethnic groups such as new arrivals from Eastern Europe and the Traveller community receive prompt and appropriate support to help them settle into mainstream life. A range of multi-agency services enable the most vulnerable children and young people to receive timely support through periods of transition and to engage in a wide range of activities that extend their interests. Increasingly these reflect cultural diversity. Consultation with these groups is used consistently well to inform, review and shape provision. The trend of improvement in educational attainment across all key stages demonstrates that the gap between the most vulnerable groups and their peers is narrowing. Progression into employment, education and training for vulnerable groups is good and improving.

Safeguarding



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Strong and effective partnership working across the voluntary and statutory sectors to ensure children are well safeguarded.</p> <p>Very good support to children and young people to reduce incidents of bullying and road traffic accidents.</p> <p>Excellent support to children and families experiencing domestic violence.</p> <p>Highly effective referral and assessment service.</p> <p>The high quality and timely support from the CAMHS to children and young people to promote their emotional health and well-being.</p> <p>Excellent range of early prevention and family support services provided through children's centres, family support services and extended services.</p> <p>Excellent arrangements for safe recruitment and the management of allegations against staff.</p>	<p>Low attendance at child protection review conferences, particularly where de-registration is being considered.</p>

16. Safeguarding is highly prioritised within services. Excellent and comprehensive information and guidance for children and young people about keeping safe is very easily accessible through a wide range of contact points such as Twist magazine, aimed at young cyclists, and others that focus on keeping children safe from sex offenders. Adults understand issues that concern children and young people and services are highly responsive to their needs. As a result children and young people said they felt more aware and personally empowered.

17. Partnership working is outstanding and a particular strength is the work with the voluntary sector. There is very good understanding and commitment to sharing responsibilities for safeguarding children and young people. The 2007 APA judged safeguarding arrangements to be outstanding and that York had a good record in provision for staying safe and had further improved outcomes since the APA in 2006.

18. Most children in the City of York who responded to the Tellus Survey reported feeling safe both living in and going to school in the city. Children and young people receive excellent support and advice on keeping safe. The council's anti-bullying strategies are highly effective and regular annual surveys and monitoring reports by the council demonstrate improvements in relation to the reduction in the number of reported incidents from 7.5% in 2002 to 6.5% in 2005 to 5.2% in 2007. Prompt action is taken by teaching staff when bullying occurs and good support is provided for victims via a range of effective responses such as access to trained peer mentors. Children spoken to as part of the review made comments such as, 'friendships groups are good, if you are struggling to make friends' and 'I like circle time because I can talk about anything that is worrying me'. A good range of 'keeping safe' training is provided through schools, children's centres and other council settings. Safeguarding is included in all parenting skills training, enabling parents to feel more confident in their ability to keep their children safe.

19. The council has effectively targeted prevention work on road traffic accidents, which has successfully led to a reduction in the number of children killed or seriously injured from seven to four; 67% of schools have a travel plan, which is significantly better than the national target of 55% and which has been achieved well before the deadline.

20. Children and young people receive excellent support to promote their emotional well-being, including their mental health needs. Specialist CAMHS workers are attached to all schools and these arrangements are very effective in identifying children and young people who need help early and providing them with prompt and timely support. Castlegate young people's one stop shop is situated in the heart of the city and provides a wide range of information, advice and support services for the 16-25 age range. Connexions operates a full service of careers information and advice and other partner agencies, including sexual health services and CAMHS, provide important youth support services. Targeted services for more vulnerable young people are particularly well used. Teenagers who were accessing CAMHS provision, housing advice and debt counselling at the centre were effusive about the help they had received to navigate their way through particularly difficult and turbulent times: young people said that the support had 'turned my life around', 'made me feel like I was worth something', and that the 'timing was crucial'.

21. Very strong inter-agency commitment to early intervention and preventative work with families experiencing difficulties has contributed significantly to a reduction in the number of children subject to a plan or placed on the child protection register. Performance at 21.2 per 10,000 is significantly better than comparators (27.6) and the national average (30.1). Arrangements for the implementation of the Common Assessment Framework are developing well. Integrated children's centres provide a wide range of high quality multi-agency services that parents find easy to access and are of consistently high quality. These include individual and group social work, health visiting, child psychology, parenting classes and play development. An excellent range of parenting programmes are available, some based on the 'Strengthening

Families, Strengthening Communities' approach. For example, parents from the Traveller community who had successfully completed this programme had increased in confidence and self-esteem and learnt new skills to support their own families and their peers. Children's centres have quickly and successfully engaged with hard-to-reach families and especially those who are newly arrived from Eastern Europe. This includes using a rich variety of culturally aware approaches, for example drop-in sessions and after-school activities such as the Culture Club.

22. The LSCB is well established and provides very good strategic leadership. It is well linked to other strategic partnerships, including those in the region, and ensures that the wider safeguarding issues are dealt with coherently. This has resulted in key issues such as domestic violence, children at risk of harming others and safe recruitment practices receiving greater focus. The Board has good representation from all the key agencies. There is very good focus on key child protection responsibilities and the wider safeguarding agenda. The Board has clear priorities for developing and improving safeguarding services and the quality of practice based on national and local objectives.

23. Children and young people who have experienced domestic violence receive very good support and advice in order to keep themselves safe. Effective partnership working through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference and the 'virtual team' approach ensures that referrals of domestic abuse are responded to promptly. Excellent joint working between the police, health services and voluntary sector providers such as Women's Aid, the NSPCC and Home Start has resulted in children and their families benefiting from a wide range of good quality services including legal advice, sheltered housing and specialist counselling through individual and group work. Children and young people affected by sexual abuse also receive intensive support through therapeutic services.

24. The council has an excellent range of resources to reduce anti-social behaviour, offending and re-offending by children and young people and this has led to a slight reduction in incidents. A relatively small number of young people are involved in low-level crime. Successful preventative initiatives have been developed and target well the most vulnerable individuals and groups. These are generally provided through the youth service and a broad range of innovative voluntary and community sector projects, such as Inspired Youth Arts and Media Project, Playspace and the Chill Out Zone programmes. Police and local communities report that these projects are effectively reducing anti-social behaviour in some of the most deprived areas.

25. The child protection system works very effectively and arrangements are well understood by partner agencies. Agencies have a very good understanding of thresholds for referring concerns to social care. The assessment and referral service is very well managed. There is very good management oversight of case work and practitioners receive regular supervision of their practice. Referrals are responded to promptly and effective systems are in place for tracking referrals through to allocation and cases are closed appropriately. The

percentage of initial assessments completed on time has increased significantly from 53.5% to 66.5% and is now in line with the national average. The number of core assessments completed on time is 91%, which is significantly better than comparators and the national average. The quality of most assessments is generally good but case audits indicated that improvements could be made to ensure that all assessments are of a good quality. Risk assessments are comprehensive and of a good quality. Effective action taken by the council has successfully reduced the number of repeat referrals from 28.9% to 22.9% and this is now in line with the national average.

26. There is excellent partnership working between agencies such as the police, health and education in respect of child protection section 47 strategy meetings. All agencies have a designated lead officer for safeguarding, and agency staff, including those from the voluntary sector, have access to a good range of multi-agency training opportunities. Greater emphasis is now being placed on addressing issues of cultural diversity given the recent rise in Eastern European families wishing to live in York. Communication between professionals is excellent. The council has had only one serious case review in five years and has taken further action to ensure that lessons are learnt from reviews in the region and nationally.

27. The City of York has fewer children subject to a child protection plan than similar authorities and nationally due to the excellent arrangements that are in place for supporting families. Re-registrations are very low and are significantly better than similar authorities and the national average. No child or young person has been on the child protection register for over two years. All children on the child protection register are allocated to a qualified social worker and receive regular visits. Child protection plans are well constructed and are reviewed regularly at conferences and core groups. However, some child protection review conferences are not always well attended, particularly when concerns about a child or young person have reduced and there is inter-agency agreement that de-registration is appropriate. Children and young people receive good support to make their views known as part of child protection planning. The number of parents who attend child protection meetings is high due to the very good support they receive from case managers.

28. Effective arrangements are in place for tracking children and young people missing from care or from education, and there are very good arrangements in place for ensuring the safety of children and young people educated at home or in alternative provision. Good arrangements are in place to ensure that children privately fostered are well safeguarded. Recent regulatory inspection judged local arrangements to be good.

29. Multi-Agency Public Protection Meetings are well established and provide a very good contribution to protecting children from dangerous offenders.

30. The council has excellent arrangements to ensure safe recruitment of staff and volunteers. Schools have been particularly well supported to ensure their systems and processes are secure. There are also good arrangements in place to manage allegations against professionals. These have been further

strengthened recently by the appointment of designated staff in partner agencies of the LSCB and the Local Authority Designated Officer ('LADO') who ensure that responses to allegations are well coordinated and progress is monitored effectively.

Looked after children and young people



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>The strong multi-agency commitment to the needs of looked after children.</p> <p>The council's commitment to and engagement in corporate parenting.</p> <p>Health needs of looked after children very well met through a good range of flexible services including excellent work by CAMHS.</p> <p>Looked after children and young people frequently involved in consultation and research which leads to service redesign and development.</p> <p>High investment in preventative services to stop children becoming looked after.</p> <p>Excellent range of education support services for looked after children who need additional support or who need to re-engage with learning.</p> <p>High numbers of children who contribute to their reviews.</p> <p>Care leavers' needs are extremely well met through the very good range of services set up to support them.</p>	

32. High priority is given to looked after children and young people by the council and its partners. The City of York is firmly committed to permanence and maintaining older young people in care, which has contributed to better stability for them and has led to an increasing number of over-16s remaining in

care. The number of looked after children has increased but remains below the England average. Corporate parenting is a key strength. Councillors have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and actively engage with young people to ensure that services better meet their needs.

33. The majority of children and young people who are looked after are placed in foster care. They live in stable placements and have their reviews held on time. The council provides good support to children living with foster carers and makes good efforts to ensure that placements do not break down. The Enhanced Fostering Service ensures that very difficult to place and challenging young people have been successfully placed with York foster carers. Performance in relation to getting children adopted within good timescales is very good.

34. The council has also been very successful in increasing the range and number of foster carers available. The recent closure of a children's home has provided further investment in preventative services, which enables additional support to be provided to those children who are most at risk of entering care. An excellent range of intensive support services are available including family group conferencing and School Home Support. This has helped to reduce the overall numbers of young people entering care. Many children have been supported to live with their extended family through a variety of arrangements including the use of Residence and Guardianship Orders.

35. Young people are now experiencing improved placement stability and increasing numbers of them are choosing to remain with their foster carers beyond their 18th birthday. As a direct consequence of this there has been a slight increase in the number of young people looked after overall.

36. Looked after children and young people are safeguarded well. All children are allocated to a qualified social worker and receive regular visits from them which they value. Care plans are of a generally good standard, demonstrating a strong focus on children's overall needs. Recent regulation inspections of fostering services, adoption services and children's homes judged these settings to be safe and good or outstanding overall.

37. Health needs for this group of young people are very well met. There is good access to a range of flexible services including CAMHS and this has resulted in very high numbers of children and young people engaging in health and dental checks. At 83% performance is banded very good and the trend is upwards. The support provided by the CAMHS is excellent. The flexible approach adopted by the professional staff and consistently good services provided have been highly commended by young people, carers, parents and social workers. Support from this service has enabled many children and young people with complex needs to be cared for locally resulting in fewer children and young people being placed out of area. Health services for looked after children and young people have been redesigned based on previous research conducted by children and young people. The findings of this research concluded that they felt well supported in staying healthy.

38. The council has high aspirations for the achievement of looked after children and young people, demonstrated by the wide range of effective educational support services available to them. Excellent data retrieval from schools and regular tracking of progress ensures that any concerns are swiftly identified and addressed. Young people receive good individual tutoring both in school, in their homes and other settings. This support continues into higher education with currently three care leavers supported at university.

39. Robust systems have been introduced to ensure the effective monitoring of the achievement and attendance of looked after children. All looked after children have Personal Education Plans to which they contribute. Very good collaboration exists between the educational psychology services, school improvement and behaviour support staff, education welfare and the education support worker for looked after children. Regular monitoring meetings are held to discuss individual progress and to review programmes to ensure the full potential of this cohort is being met. Tailored provision to address specific needs has also increased, which includes the new 14–16 Skills Centre at Danesgate where strong improvements regarding motivation, attainment and attendance of those on the centre's roll have been recorded.

40. The impact of improvements to the quality of support now in place is clear. Recent unvalidated data shows that there has been a significant increase in the percentage of young people leaving care with one or more GCSEs (71.4% so far), a 30% improvement from last year and the trend is upward. In 2007 one young person achieved three GCSE passes at grades A*-C and five achieved one or more A*-G grades. Numbers in this cohort are low, eight in total, with the significant proportion entering the care system during their mid-teens, and some with a long history of poor engagement with education. Two (25%) young people out of this group had statements. Younger children at Key Stages 1 and 2 who are in the care system do very well at school. This success is reducing the gap between the achievement of looked after children and the general population in York. All young people leaving school at 16 in 2007 entered education, employment or training and have sustained full engagement.

41. The council has taken effective action to reduce the number of looked after children missing 25 days or more from education. There is regular monitoring of attendance and early identification of those at risk of missing school. As a result of this, since September 2007 the attendance of looked after children has improved significantly from a poor baseline of 21.05% prior to September, with no young person missing from school for 25 days or more. An excellent range of support for young people who have previously disengaged from education is in place. Young people with a history of non-school attendance prior to being looked after are now engaging positively with learning through the excellent support they get from the Alternative Learning Project.

42. Looked after young people who engage in offending behaviour are well supported by good joint working arrangements between the youth offending team and the social care services. Very few are involved in re-offending and

offending behaviour and good preventative programmes such as the Youth Inclusion Support Programme (YISP) and targeted youth work are contributing well to sustaining these low numbers. Free access to leisure provision and city libraries and museums is available for looked after children and their families. Travel is subsidised and the council and partner agencies make sure that this group is given early notification of holiday projects, after school activities and special events to ensure that their participation is encouraged.

43. The views of looked after young people are actively sought and they have excellent opportunities to take part in decision-making and in planning and influencing the development of services. Media and the arts are used frequently to help them tell their stories, raise awareness and campaign for change. They know their rights and get good support to make their views known. High numbers of them take part in their reviews. The work of the 'Show Me That I Matter' looked after consultation group is highly commendable. In the last year looked after children and young people have achieved many improvements through the challenge they have provided to senior officers and councillors. A recent celebration event for looked after young people which the group organised has received excellent feedback from officers, invited guests and young people themselves. Young people described the event as 'brilliant' and 'the best ever'.

44. Care leavers receive excellent support from leaving care services. Strong partnership working between the leaving care services and housing services ensures priority is given to care leavers. There are very effective arrangements for preparing young people for independence; the pathway team in partnership with other agencies ensures that priority is given to preparing young people for independence. Young people have good opportunities to experiment, for example living on their own in a 'taster' flat before becoming independent. The council continues to support care leavers above and beyond the statutory requirements once they have become independent both practically and financially. They receive good support to manage their money, to eat well, to stay safe and to live as healthily as possible.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>A high and positive profile for inclusion, which is well embedded in planning and practice.</p> <p>Very strong multi-agency work which demonstrates a keen sense of responsibility for inclusion across the agencies.</p> <p>Exemplary early identification, integration and intervention work.</p> <p>Excellent school improvement and inclusion services which promote inclusive, independent institutions.</p> <p>Excellent use of data tracking for pupils with special educational needs.</p> <p>A very high quality and effective training programme – much of it accredited – available to all staff involved with children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.</p> <p>A highly skilled workforce.</p> <p>An extensive range of leisure and out-of-school activities for children and young people in both mainstream and specialist provision.</p> <p>A very wide range of consultation and participation in decision-making by children, young people and parents.</p>	

46. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the City of York have a very high profile in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and a clear voice in the services and activities which support them. The concept of inclusion is well embedded in planning and practice and the necessary structures, which include health, the local authority social services and education, are in place to bring about further development. The new Head of Integrated Services for Disabled Children effectively links operational and strategic management for children aged 0–19 years with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and ensures the impetus to further improvement.

47. Excellent multi-agency work is undertaken within strong working relationships and demonstrates a keen sense of responsibility across the agencies with regard to inclusion. Parents and schools respect the council's

willingness to consult, discuss and be responsive to their concerns. This very effectively contributes to and underpins the health, learning and safeguarding of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Effective joint commissioning between the council and health partners has resulted in a reduction in the number of children and young people placed out of area. Training for child protection and anti-bullying has been of a high quality, schools feel well supported with appropriate procedures in place and parental surveys reflect increased satisfaction. There has been very good city-wide training in schools and settings to facilitate development of disability equality schemes.

48. Exemplary early identification, integration and intervention work is being implemented through very close multi-agency work and the sharing of posts. Young children and their parents are very well served by the Child Development Centre, Portage, the work of the Joint Panel for complex cases and the Early Support programme which helps those with moderate, severe and complex needs. Special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) are in all early years settings. Trained key workers assist parents in the coordination of support and parents value them highly. A specialist social care team provides advice and assistance to children and families to enable them to access a range of care packages to meet complex needs; this includes respite care and access to sharing care services. The team works very well with the referral and assessment team to ensure that child protection concerns are responded to well. However, a staffing shortfall in the specialist social care team has meant that some longstanding children in need cases requiring reviews of care plans are not always completed on time.

49. Specialist early intervention, including that for autism, speech and language therapy or physiotherapy, and the increasing delegation of financial resources to schools without recourse to a statement of special educational need, has meant that many children have been enabled to attend their local early years setting or their local school. Transport provided is reliable. Health services work very effectively with children's centres, settings and schools. Parents have real choice, which has relieved parental anxiety and enabled many children and young people to become established in their local community. The Parent Partnership Service supports parents very effectively in making choices and decisions. Thresholds and criteria for statements of special educational need are clear. For children who need it, the statementing process is carried out very efficiently and the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need is significantly lower than the national average or statistical neighbours. Parents speak highly of the quality of provision and the role of the specialist Hob Moor Oaks primary and Applefields secondary schools in their children's lives.

50. A wide range of support programmes and family learning is available to parents through, for example, the Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities initiative and the Limetrees facility, the latter of which provides very good support for families and young people with autism or mental health difficulties. Very high quality respite care is available for parents through The

Glen residential children home and through the Sharing Care scheme. Families are very satisfied with the quality and level of support available to them. Direct payments and individualised budgets are promoted. A good and increasing number of families and young people are accessing care in this way. Consultation with parents is very good and the Childcare Sufficiency survey shows that 83% of parents with a child with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are happy with the quality of care that their child receives.

51. Information on services and organisations available to parents is provided through the very useful web-based *Guide to Services for Disabled Children and Young People in York*, which is also available in hard copy. Information on a range of topics, including holiday activities, the Parents' Forum, the 'Special Olympics', finance, housing etc is published through newsletters and newspapers such as *School's Out* and the Children's Information Service website. Each children's centre has an Information Champion. Parents are widely consulted and are represented on many strategic groups. In response to consultation and parents' request for a support network, a Parents' Forum has recently been set up. The local authority provided a very substantial level of officer support and funding for a part-time coordinator for this initiative, which is well underway.

52. The School Improvement Service provides excellent support and challenge to schools, and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. Data tracking across the key stages is excellent and close monitoring of progress is carried out. In addition, a wide range of programmes is provided in schools which successfully support emotional and social well-being. The majority of schools use the York Self-Review Framework very effectively to monitor their performance with regard to inclusion. A number have been accredited with the Inclusion Certificate and now work collaboratively with other partners as peer assessors. Permanent exclusions from special schools are below the national average and fixed-term exclusions have reduced for all pupils and are now below the national average. An excellent range of courses is available to all staff working with children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from early years onwards, with many of the courses being accredited. These, together with learning networks, conferences and dissemination of good practice workshops, develop staff confidence, knowledge, understanding and ability to meet the range of special educational needs. This has a very significant impact on the capacity of staff with regard to inclusion. Schools and early years settings feel very well supported by the authority and the work of the Educational Psychology Service is held in high regard.

53. Very effective consultation is carried out with and by children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with regard to the services and facilities they use and require. Their voice and opinions are highly valued and respected. They are involved in interviewing staff and have had considerable influence on the school environment and on leisure centres in meeting their access obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act. Their opinion on the accessibility of leaflets and other written information is also

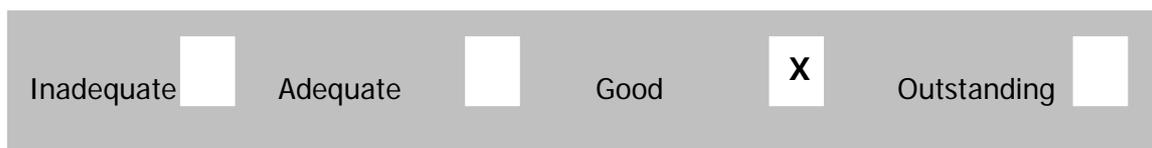
frequently requested. Through 'The Heard' project, older young people have had a significant influence on CAMHS delivery with involvement on the strategic board and ongoing provision of a telephone support line and website for young people needing someone from their peer group with whom they can talk. Young people feel empowered and consider that they make a difference.

54. An extensive range of leisure and out-of-school activities is available in both inclusive and specialist provisions. These are very effectively supported by voluntary and independent organisations such as Special Needs Activities and Play Provision in York (SNAPPY) and student volunteers organised through the Children's Society's 'Participation, Advocacy, Consultancy and Training' (PACT) initiative, who very ably support individual young people to be integrated into mainstream and specialist activities. These activities cater for interests in personal development, social and interpersonal skills, performing arts and sports. The Disability Sports Coach provides impressive training for club leaders in working with young people with a disability, which increases choice and capacity around the authority. Children and young people enjoy living in York but find the cobbled streets in the city centre difficult when in a wheelchair.

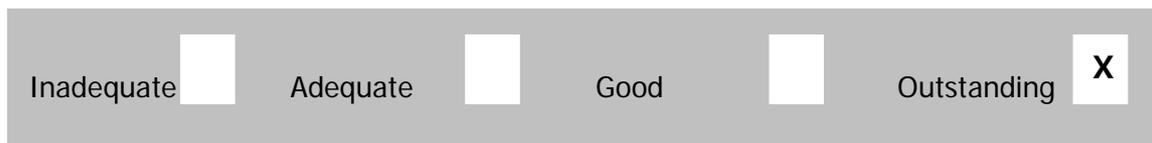
55. Close attention and preparation is given to easing the path of transition for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as they move through education and/or care. Early Years Services work very closely with primary school SENCOs and Connexions workers are effectively involved from Year 9 onwards. The vast majority of young people contribute to their annual reviews and care plans, where necessary, through the use of photographs, sign type and supported writing. A multi-agency 'Moving into Adult Life' group works effectively to support progress into adult health and social services. Young people reported that they have been given good support overall.

56. The York Independent Living Skills initiative is very successful in providing supported independent travel training for young people and an increasing number of young people enjoy travelling independently. Different housing initiatives allow for young people to develop independent living skills through shared housing and independent accommodation, and young people were very positive about these opportunities. Waiting times for such accommodation are not unduly long and give time for planning and preparation. Connexions workers provide good support to young people wishing to continue in education or training. At post-16, young people have the opportunity to go on to college or to attend work-based learning. Young people enjoy these programmes but were less positive about the provision available for longer term training and employment prospects. The recently opened 14-16 Skills Centre at Danesgate has increased the number and range of vocational opportunities available and plans are in hand for developing further provision at Archbishop Holgate's CE School. Pre-entry level courses are generally limited and work-based learning is of too short a duration. A strategic multi-agency group is in place and action is being taken to address the issue.

Service management



Capacity to improve



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>High level strategic planning based on clear priorities and an appropriate relationship to Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets.</p> <p>A strong focus on improvement in outcomes, early intervention, prevention and inclusion permeating all planning and activity.</p> <p>Partnership working, including with the voluntary and community sector, enhances capacity very effectively.</p> <p>Strong and effective leadership and management at both senior officer and middle manager levels.</p> <p>Sound financial management with a good focus on directing resources to priorities and achieving value for money.</p> <p>Good multi-agency training.</p>	<p>Lack of capacity to develop an overarching workforce development strategy.</p> <p>Lack of interim adjustment by the Partnership Board of medium-term targets.</p>

58. Ambition for children and young people in the City of York is outstanding. The CYPP 2007–10 is based on a longstanding vision, which is supported by Every Child Matters principles and underpinned by six appropriate and clear priorities, including closing the gap between the majority of children and young people and those in vulnerable or deprived groups. CYPP priorities are very effectively woven into the LAA priorities and targets. The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (known as the YorOK Board), which has

responsibility for the CYPP, is appropriately aligned to the Local Strategic Partnership and, through its membership, to other thematic partnerships, such as the Learning City Partnership. Consequently, ambitions sit within a high level framework which supports the effectiveness of their delivery.

59. The CYPP, and consequent service development and delivery, is based on very thorough and wide-ranging consultation with children, young people, parents, carers and partners. This focus on consultation is enshrined in the YorOK Involvement Strategy, which ensures that service users' views are integral rather than tokenistic. Needs analysis is undertaken well and ensures that those in greatest need are clearly identified. North Yorkshire and York PCT has an Equalities and Diversity Strategy and uses impact assessments. Although the overarching Equalities Strategy within the council is out-of-date and subject to renewed corporate focus for improvement, equalities issues have been mainstreamed within children's services, including through equalities statements in service plans, and there is clear evidence of good impact on outcomes for vulnerable groups.

60. Prioritisation is outstanding. There is a well articulated and realistic Inclusion Strategy which underpins the work of the council and its partners. Prevention is firmly embedded in principle in the CYPP and in practice. The council achieved Beacon Status for early intervention in 2006 and for school improvement in 2007. Recent restructuring has led to the creation of a new service arm of partnerships and early intervention within children's services, led by a new assistant director, which enables a better focus on vulnerable groups and integrated working. Where new groups of vulnerable people have emerged, such as Turkish refugees and asylum seekers, their needs are being identified and addressed despite not being identified as a specific group within the original CYPP. Good community cohesion guidance for schools to support them in undertaking their statutory duty has just been issued. All partners are aware of their roles in supporting the achievement of priorities.

61. Outstanding safeguarding arrangements are underwritten by a good LSCB Business Plan. Support for children and young people experiencing domestic violence or mental health issues is excellent. The focus on preventative services, such as children's centres, YISP and the Homelessness Strategy, ensures that vulnerable groups are well supported. The Young People's Survival Guide to York supports young people effectively in directing their own lives.

62. Value for money is very good overall. The council has the 20th lowest Direct Schools Grant overall, together with the second lowest council tax within unitary authorities, giving it the lowest resources per head of all multi-purpose councils. Aligned budgets are identified against CYPP priorities and there is good evidence of redirection of resources to priorities, for example the closure of a residential children's home and reinvestment in foster care and preventative services. There are robust systems in place to secure value for money in out-of-city placements; the Schools' Finance Team provides good support to an effective Schools Forum; the schools funding formula supports priorities; and there is good management of the capital programme, including

the delivery of a successful PFI bid for three schools which has no ongoing revenue affordability gap. Together with its partners, the council achieves significant improvement overall across all five Every Child Matters outcomes.

63. The capacity of the council and its partners is very good. Partnership, including with the voluntary and community sector, is integral to success at all levels. Partners have been involved well in strategic planning and the YorOK Board has been strengthened with additional membership to ensure wide representation. It has a capable Chair, provided by the Primary Care Trust (PCT). Children's Trust arrangements, including the Children's Trust Unit, have been firmly established under the YorOK Board. Partnership has played a major part in delivering successful outcomes through integrated working in children's centres and, for example, for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and in 14–19 developments.

64. The Executive Member for Children's Services is a significant asset to the council, using her knowledge, skills and understanding of the agenda to carry out her statutory responsibilities and beyond with great care. Corporate parenting is effective and recognised as a high priority. The new senior management team is very well regarded and capable, having gelled together and become highly effective in a short time. Middle managers are equally capable and committed to integrated working to improve outcomes. The quality of staff at all levels and the commitment demonstrated was consistently good. The workforce is stable, with low turnover and no significant recruitment problems. Staff have access to high quality and appropriate specialist training and there has been good development of e-access to multi-agency training on the YorOK website.

65. Good capacity building activities are taking place in the voluntary and community sector. Good use is also made of York University, for example, in providing research into areas of specific focus, such as the low but rising teenage pregnancy rate at 16+, and in building a relationship with undergraduates in social work to encourage them to consider a career with the council. All schools meet the extended schools core offer, well ahead of the national target of 2010. Children, young people, parents and carers are involved in service planning, for example, in children's centres, in services for those who are looked after or those with mental health needs.

66. Joint commissioning is undertaken well in a number of individual strands, such as CAMHS, teenage pregnancy and the Children's Fund, and plans have recently been put in place to develop an overarching joint commissioning strategy, which the council anticipates will bring greater cohesion to this area. The Common Assessment Framework has been launched but it is too early to identify its effectiveness; plans are rightly in place to support further development.

67. Although some useful individual workforce initiatives exist, most are at an early stage and the lack of sufficient capacity to take forward the development of an embryonic workforce planning strategy creates insufficient focus on the importance of this issue in ensuring sustainable delivery of the CYPP.

Corporately, sickness absence within the council was in the worst quartile nationally in 2006–07. In the Learning, Culture and Children's Services Directorate (LCCS), it was better than the corporate figure overall and, following sustained attention, it is now improving well.

68. Performance management is good overall. Regular monitoring of the CYPP scorecard and wider LAA indicators takes place at the YorOK Board, together with specific thematic agenda items on priorities such as services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and teenage pregnancy. Regular and substantial performance monitoring also takes place through elected member advisory panels, which bring together service plan progress, budget monitoring and performance indicators. Areas of underperformance are challenged, bringing about improvement, for example in the timeliness of core assessments. The clarity and usefulness of the scrutiny function, however, is a weakness overall in the council.

69. Good and widely accessible data is provided by the council's LCCS Management Information Service. Performance information is used well by managers, for example in safeguarding, to monitor practice and inform the LSCB and by the Youth Offending Team Board and operational managers, leading to improvement in overall performance since 2005. Generally, the relationship between individual performance development reviews, team plans and service plans in LCCS is sound. Almost all LCCS staff have performance reviews, thus enabling them to understand how their performance supports the achievement of priorities. Case tracking showed that multi-agency plans are regularly monitored through a review process, ensuring needs are met. The voice of children and young people is heard effectively in performance monitoring, for example at the Show Me That I Matter panel for those who are looked after.

70. There are, however, some areas for improvement. To date, whilst the relationship of the community strategy and corporate strategy to the CYPP and relevant service plans has been present in content, a coherent audit trail has not been clear. However, in April 2008, a new assistant director-level service plan will make a direct link between initiatives, actions and higher-level strategic plans, including the CYPP, LAA, national performance indicators and corporate priorities. High level strategic targets for 2007-08, initially set within a CYPP three-year context, have not been amended in the light of success in achieving outturns in 2006–07. Thus, in a few cases, they are now insufficiently challenging.

71. The capacity of the council and its partners to improve further is outstanding. There is a clear focus on the importance of a learning culture, where partners' willingness to listen to each other and to users, and to adapt as a consequence, plays a significant role in their ability to make progress. Despite lean financial circumstances, there is a real commitment to maximise the impact of resources. The PCT has plans in place to achieve financial stability in the medium term and is fully committed to further developing partnership activity, following their relatively recent major reorganisation. Improvement to date has

been good in priority areas, for example in the percentage of young people leaving care with one GCSE and in the reduction in the number of looked after children and young people missing 25 days or more of attendance at school. Targeted support for schools in deprived areas has led to a significantly greater increase in attainment of five or more GCSE grades at A*–C in these schools than the average for the city. Overall improvement in performance is being sustained and outstanding outcomes for children and young people's services have been maintained over time.

Annex A

MOST RECENTLY PUBLISHED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE CITY OF YORK

Summary

The council has sustained and further improved the quality of its services for children and young people, against a continuing background of low levels of funding. The outcomes for children and young people's services are outstanding in nearly all aspects. Standards in schools are above average and contribute considerably to the economic well-being of young people. There is a clear strategy for 14–19 curriculum development and strong partnership working. The council continuously strives for improvement in how well it provides for young people, especially the most vulnerable. It has improved the outcomes for children's safety and well-being, and for many aspects of their health.

The full annual performance assessment can be found at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=3113&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa_2007_816.pdf

Annex B

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SECTION OF THE CORPORATE ASSESSMENT REPORT

1. Outcomes for children and young people in the City of York area are outstanding for enjoying and achieving, staying safe, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being and good, with some outstanding features, for being healthy. Those children and young people who are most vulnerable benefit from highly effective intervention and support services. The quality of CAMHS provision is exceptionally good with prompt access available for the most vulnerable groups, and particularly those who are looked after, those with special educational needs or learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are known to have offended. Looked after children make good progress in health and improving progress regarding educational outcomes. All those who left school in summer 2007 entered employment with training and are still fully engaged. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good educational progress, receive good access to health services and are very well supported through transition into adult services.

2. Service management in children and young people's services is good with outstanding capacity to improve. Senior officers within the council have specific, delegated responsibilities for key functions and perform at a consistently high level. The portfolio holder for children and young people provides exceptional support and engagement. The Children and young people's views are constantly sought and figure very highly in decision-making processes at all levels of the service. The CYPP demonstrates a strong social inclusion ethos that adds significant strength to the well-targeted preventative agenda. Partnership working has increased capacity to ensure delivery is of the highest standard across services and that the needs of the most vulnerable groups are constantly reviewed and refreshed. Resources, though at low levels, are targeted well and to maximum effect. Data systems have been enhanced so that the local authority, schools and providers can track individual and cohort progress effectively and take any necessary appropriate action to ensure continuous improvement.

3. The council's contribution towards improving health outcomes for children and young people is good, with some excellent features. Co-location of services and the excellent multi-disciplinary work within the new children's centres are providing a strong impetus for improving health outcomes. All schools are signed up to the Healthy Schools Award, with over two thirds of schools already achieving the standard. The CAMHS provides excellent support, particularly to the most vulnerable, for example those children and young people who are looked after and those who have offended. Teenage conception rates remain comparatively low against national comparators but are rising in the 16–18 age group. Research is currently underway in partnership with York University to gain better insight into this particularly stubborn trend.

4. Children and young people appear to be safe and the safeguarding arrangements are very effective. The City of York Safeguarding Board takes a strong leadership role, encouraging excellent partnership working, particularly in relation to domestic violence and in the investigation and monitoring of allegations against professionals. It has been commended for its work in developing the coverage of clearances completed through the Criminal Records Bureau for staff in independent schools. Most children reported that they felt safe. Early identification, referral and assessment procedures are highly effective and interventions are both timely and well matched to meet needs. There are very few looked after children. The number is below the national average and, whilst the care population has increased, the number of admissions to care shows a significant reduction. Placement stability is good.

5. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people achieve well and enjoy their lives is outstanding. Standards in schools are above average and contribute considerably to the economic well-being of young people. There is a clear strategy for 14–19 curriculum development and strong partnership working. The council continuously strives for improvement in how well it provides for young people, especially the most vulnerable. The progress of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The achievement of looked after children and young people is satisfactory and improving. Parents and carers with the most needs receive excellent support in helping their children to enjoy school. The programme for developing children's centres and extended schools is ahead of regional and national comparators. Effective partnership working across a range of statutory, voluntary and community groups ensures that there are many excellent opportunities for children and young people to extend their interests and enjoy their leisure time.

6. The impact of all services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is outstanding. Consultation is at the heart of service development and delivery and there is an excellent range of activities and programmes used effectively to help young people gain confidence and take personal responsibility. Children and young people with disabilities are involved as fully as possible in decisions that affect their lives, such as accessibility to leisure facilities, support in transition into education, employment and training, and provision of services in children's centres. The Show Me That I Matter panel has been highly effective in engaging looked after young people in challenging council officers about decisions and planning. The youth service and other partner agencies work diligently with those young people who are 'hard to reach' and have achieved considerable success in getting reluctant learners back into mainstream schools.

7. The impact of services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is outstanding. Provision for family learning is outstanding. The proportion of young people in education or training is very good and much higher than average. Low levels of young people not involved can be attributed to improved guidance and tracking post-16 as well as the introduction of very successful personal development programmes which encourage and support

young people to move on to more formal learning. There is a clear strategy for 14–19 curriculum development and strong partnership working to extend the choice of both academic and vocational pathways. Looked after young people post-16 and those leaving care are very successful in finding and sustaining jobs with training. Provision for those young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is expanding but still remains insufficient to meet demand.

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 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 the City of York 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).