



Pilot joint area review of children's services

West Sussex Children's Services Authority Area

Better
education
and care

A report for children and young people about the services they receive in West Sussex

The report covers the following issues

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and do well at school and as they grow up
- Make a good contribution to society
- Be successful in whatever they choose to do when they are adults.

This report is the result of a pilot inspection, undertaken by ten inspectorates and commissions listed in section 20 of the Children Act 2004 to test methodology for Joint Area Reviews (JARs).

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Why should I read this?

The law says that inspectors must look at and then report on how well local services serve children and young people in an area. This is called a "review". Inspectors visited your area recently. You might like to read this, or the full report, to find out what they had to say.

What did the inspectors do?

Seven inspectors visited West Sussex in June 2005 so they could see what life is like for children and young people in the area. They:

- listened to a number of children and young people they met at youth centres, community centres, a children's centre and schools, especially in the Littlehampton area,
- talked with adults working with children and young people (like social workers, teachers, youth workers, nurses, doctors, police officers and counsellors),
- spoke to a few parents, as well as other people caring for children,
- met with the local Youth Forum, and spoke to someone from the Youth Parliament,
- heard from the council and other agencies what it thinks about the services it provides for children,
- read quite a few reports, and
- visited services used by children, to see things for themselves.

The inspectors also looked at how well particular children are doing (like those with a learning difficulty, or disability or in council care).

How well are children and young people doing in West Sussex?

The inspectors found that:

- ✓ overall children and young people are doing well compared to children in other parts of the country,
- ✓ the majority of children and young people are healthy,
- ✓ educational standards achieved by most children and young people are good,
- ✓ young people behave responsibly and some make a good contribution to their schools and the area in which they live,
- ✓ young people are well prepared for working life,
- ✓ the numbers of children and young people involved in crime is below that found in other parts of the country.

Inspectors also found that:

- children and young people living along the coastal strip do not achieve as well as those in other parts of the county,
- children and young people looked after by the council do not do as well as others in the county,
- young people leaving care have difficulty finding suitable homes,
- a small number of children and young people with mental health problems do not get the help they need quickly enough,

- too many children with very serious disabilities or difficulties are educated away from their homes,
- the small numbers of young people involved in crime re-offend more than those in other parts of the country.

What were the main things children and young people told inspectors about your area?

Children and young people say they are often asked for their views but are not told enough about the decisions adults make after they have given them. The inspectors agreed with this view.

What things did the inspectors say are good for children and young people in my area?

- ✓ The services for young children and their families.
- ✓ Education services help children and young people to enjoy their education and leisure activities.
- ✓ Local services contribute well to keeping children and young people healthy.
- ✓ Health education especially for sexual health, substance misuse, healthy eating and physical activity.
- ✓ The way services identify children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities and the help they provide.
- ✓ The most vulnerable children and young people are kept safe from abuse and exploitation.
- ✓ Local services are well run and have enough resources to continue to improve the provision for children and young people.
- ✓ The support for those who face particular difficulties, such as being a young mum or those with difficulties with drugs and alcohol.

What do inspectors think were not good enough and should change to make things better for children and young people?

- ❖ Children and young people who are in secure homes should be able to see a doctor without having to go to a surgery,
- ❖ More social workers need to be appointed,
- ❖ More affordable housing needs to be found for young people, especially those leaving care or secure accommodation,
- ❖ Services for those with mental health problems need to be improved,
- ❖ Children looked after by the council and those excluded from school should have better educational opportunities to help them achieve more,
- ❖ Local provision for children and young people with serious learning difficulties and disabilities needs to be increased. These children and their families should be more involved in making decisions about their future,
- ❖ All staff should have more training to make sure they are able to help children and young people from minority ethnic groups more effectively,

- ❖ The council needs to develop a way of ensuring the views of children and young people from across the county are used in decision making and find ways of telling them about the decisions which have been made.