

Joint area review

Wokingham 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 2007 annual performance assessment (APA) for Wokingham judged the council's children's services as good and its capacity to improve as good.
2. This report assesses the contribution of local services in ensuring that children and young people:
 - at risk or requiring safeguarding are effectively cared for
 - who are looked after achieve the best possible outcomes
 - with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve the best possible outcomes.
3. The following investigations were also carried out:
 - the impact of the partners' strategy on improving the provision of child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).

Context

4. The borough of Wokingham became a unitary authority in April 1998 after the abolition of the former Berkshire County Council. Situated approximately 30 miles west of London and bordered by Oxfordshire to the north and Hampshire to the south west, Wokingham is a small and prosperous area, ranked second least deprived in the country. The town of Wokingham and the areas of Earley and Woodley are the three main conurbations. Although the local economy is strong with above average employment, there are pockets of marked deprivation in Woodley, the south east of the borough and parts of Wokingham town.
5. The estimated population of 153,800 comprises 20% children and young people aged 0–19 years and 64% adults of working age. The most recent census shows the Black and minority ethnic population to be just over 10%. In 2008, 17.5% of children and young people in Wokingham schools were of Black and minority ethnic heritage.
6. Pre-16 education is provided through 332 childminders and 72 private, voluntary and independent providers. There are seven children's centres, one nursery school, nine infant schools, nine junior schools, 31 primary schools, nine secondary schools, two special schools and one pupil referral unit. Integrated youth support services are delivered by children's services through the youth service, the youth offending service, teenage substance misuse services, Connexions and multi-agency neighbourhood teams.

7. The local Learning and Skills Council operates across the six Berkshire unitary authorities in addition to Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire.

8. The majority of learners access post-16 education and training through nine school sixth form colleges and provision outside the borough which includes Thames Valley University and Bracknell and Wokingham College. A range of work-based learning is available in Wokingham through providers based outside the area. Entry to Employment programmes are delivered through a consortium of six organisations. Family and community learning is delivered in partnership with learndirect, Crescent Centre, Karten Centre and Bracknell and Wokingham College.

9. Primary health care is commissioned by NHS Berkshire West Primary Care Trust. Acute hospital services are provided by The Royal Berkshire Foundation NHS Trust. Mental health services for children and young people are commissioned by the council and the Primary Care Trust, and delivered by Berkshire Health Care Trust. Commissioning and contract arrangements are currently being revised.

10. Children's social care services are provided through: 30 foster carers; a range of independent fostering and residential provision; 13 shared carers for disabled children; a child protection investigation team; three social care teams integrated within multi-disciplinary neighbourhood teams; an integrated learning difficulties and/or disabilities service; a children and young people's resource team; and an emergency duty team shared with other Berkshire unitary authorities. At the time of the inspection, there were 67 children and young people looked after by the council. Short break facilities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are accessed by 51 families, of whom 20 access overnight residential provision made by the council. A new four-bedded residential home for looked after children in Wokingham is close to opening.

11. The Thames Valley Police Service operates across the six Berkshire unitary authorities, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. Services for children and young people who are at risk of offending or who have offended are provided through the Wokingham Youth Offending Service, which was established in October 2006. There are no young offender institutions in the area.

Main findings

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

- Fundamental aspects of safeguarding are inadequate, including key elements of children's social care. The council and its partners have recognised the significant weaknesses in safeguarding and action is being taken to tackle them. There is some evidence of very recent

improvement in practice; however, these are not embedded and the impact has yet to be evaluated by the council and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

- The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people is adequate. There has been a significant improvement in placement stability from a low base, but performance is still below average. The proportion of children in residential care, as well as the cost of placements, remains high. Health needs are met adequately and educational achievement is satisfactory. Care leavers are prepared well for independence.
- The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Good impact from preventative early intervention is evident in many aspects of their lives. Health care for those with complex needs is good. Educational achievement is good. The range of post-16 education and training is limited for those with the most complex needs. Planning for transition to adulthood is comprehensive.
- The impact of the partners' strategy on improving the provision of CAMHS is inadequate. Progress in finalising the new CAMHS strategy based on a comprehensive analysis of need and consultation with children, young people and families is slow. The quality of current services and outcomes for most children and young people who use them are good.
- The management of services for children and young people in Wokingham is adequate. Capacity is adequate overall, however past financial management and aspects of social care monitoring have been inadequate. The focus of councillors and service management has been weak in some aspects of children's social care, although this is now improving. Neighbourhood-based multi-agency working has been implemented successfully and is improving access and early intervention. The capacity to improve further is adequate.

Grades

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

	Local services overall
Safeguarding	1
Looked after children	2
Learning difficulties and/or disabilities	3
Service management	2
Capacity to improve	2

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.

The local authority should:

- ensure safe recruitment guidance is followed consistently and that Criminal Records Bureau and employment checks are undertaken for all staff working with children and young people
- raise the profile and priority of services for vulnerable children, young people and families among all staff and councillors
- review systems for the management of contacts and referrals to the social care service
- improve the quality of recording in social care case files
- ensure that the review process for looked after children and children with child protection plans is timely, robust, challenging and effective.

For action over the next six months

The local authority should:

- ensure there is sufficient management capacity and expertise to improve the overall effectiveness of social care

- improve the quality and timeliness of initial and core assessments
- improve performance monitoring in social care ensuring that there is accessible robust data and effective managerial oversight
- improve school attendance of looked after children and young people.

The Primary Care Trust should:

- improve access to occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech and language therapy for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in mainstream schools
- increase the proportion of looked after children who have annual dental checks.

The local partnership should:

- improve the overall effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board by putting in place robust monitoring, auditing and evaluation arrangements for safeguarding and by ensuring there is good oversight and robust challenge by all partners
- complete the review of respite care and put provision in place to meet the full range of need
- develop and implement a domestic violence strategy
- undertake full consultation with children, young people and families to inform the development of CAMHS
- complete and implement a strategy for CAMHS.

For action in the longer term

The local authority should:

- revisit and improve equality impact statements and use these to ensure equality and diversity are addressed in all service delivery
- continue to improve the stability of long-term placements for looked after children and young people.

The local partnership should:

- develop the range of post-16 education and training provision at entry level and for young people with the most complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Equality and diversity

13. The council and its partners' vision to make Wokingham an excellent place for every child and young person is reflected in the inclusive approach in the Children and Young People's Plan. Many services demonstrate a commitment to promoting equality and diversity by seeking to ensure that the needs of the local community are met. Despite the shared vision, however, corporate support across the council has been inconsistent and equality and diversity issues are not sufficiently well prioritised across children's services as a whole. A comprehensive plan of action is not in place and the council has yet to meet the criteria for Level 2 of the Equalities Standard for Local Government. Sound progress has been made in consulting the increasingly diverse population, however the council has not yet succeeded in fully engaging all groups as equal partners.

14. There is still much variability in outcomes between the majority of children and young people and the most vulnerable. Although overall educational attainment is among the highest in the country, some vulnerable children and young people are underachieving. Targeted work by the council is helping to close the gap and tackle social exclusion, and there is some good practice to build upon. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well and make better progress than their peers in similar areas. A good range of projects in the community, youth service and schools provide opportunities for children and young people to immerse themselves in other cultural heritages and lifestyles. Some schools have responded very well to the needs of children in the early stages of learning English. However long-term planning and the necessary infrastructure are not yet in place to anticipate and respond to on-going demographic change and to ensure equality of opportunity for all children and young people.

Safeguarding

Inadequate Adequate Good Outstanding

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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good preventative and early intervention work.</p> <p>Good implementation of the common assessment framework.</p>	<p>Significant weaknesses in the management of the LSCB.</p>

<p>Good multi-agency working in neighbourhood teams.</p>	<p>Safe recruitment processes not followed consistently.</p> <p>Lack of systematic auditing, evaluation and analysis of safeguarding in children's social care and across partner agencies.</p> <p>Domestic violence strategy not in place.</p> <p>Poor quality and timeliness of initial and core assessments.</p> <p>Poor quality of child protection work and timeliness of reviews.</p> <p>Poor quality recording, an inadequate electronic database and a lack of robust information leading to ineffective performance monitoring.</p> <p>Insufficient social worker capacity, high staff turnover and over-reliance on agency staff.</p> <p>Limited management capacity in children's social care.</p>
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16. Fundamental aspects of safeguarding are inadequate, including key elements of children's social care. The council and its partners have recognised the significant weaknesses and action is being taken to tackle them. There is some very recent improvement in practice; however, this is not embedded and the impact has not yet been evaluated.

17. Early intervention and prevention services are good. Services such as extended schools and children's centres have been strengthened by improving partnership work across the borough. The roll-out of children's centres has been well managed and targeted appropriately to communities with the greatest need. This, together with the successful establishment of multi-disciplinary neighbourhood teams, is ensuring greater focus on early intervention and improved access to specialist services for vulnerable children and young people. A wide range of well-managed parenting programmes meets the needs of families. There has been good implementation of the common assessment framework with a robust multi-agency reviewing system which includes education, health and social care professionals. The 'Team around the Child' arrangements enable prompt identification of support and effective action to be taken. There is some early evidence of the positive impact of the common assessment framework, but this has not been evaluated formally by partners.

18. Peer mediation programmes are run successfully in schools and help children and young people manage and resolve low-level conflict. The behaviour support team employs a good range of behaviour management strategies to help children and young people at risk of exclusion. Good action has been taken to improve support and the quality of education for those out of mainstream school. Alternative provision is identified promptly. The secondary pupil referral unit has been relocated to high quality premises and works well with the reintegration panel to ensure individual needs are met and moves are managed effectively. Effective work has been undertaken in partnership with schools to reduce exclusions; however exclusion rates remain higher for some groups of Black and minority ethnic children than their peers. There are good arrangements between partners for identifying the whereabouts of children who go missing from care or education. All schools have sound anti-bullying strategies in place and good partnership work has resulted in a reduction in anti-social behaviour. However, the council does not collect sufficient data to enable it to monitor the full impact of strategies across the borough. The Tellus2 survey shows that there is more to do to ensure that all schools respond effectively to bullying.

19. The promotion of healthy lifestyles, including the development of children's social and emotional well-being, is good. The Healthy Schools programme is supported very well by the council and virtually all schools are actively engaged. A high proportion of schools have achieved the national accreditation compared to similar areas. The teenage pregnancy rate is low and the partnership is on track to meet the 2010 national target. Recent local data show a slight increase in the rate and plans are in place to develop a more targeted approach. A multi-agency substance misuse service has recently been established and delivers drug awareness training to professionals and young people. The proportion of young people in substance misuse treatment has increased from a low base and is now adequate. The quality of the specialist provision made by CAMHS and outcomes for most service users are good. However, a clear strategic plan for the development of future services is not in place and this is a significant gap.

20. The Youth Offending Service makes a good contribution to preventative work through the multi-agency neighbourhood teams. However, the inspection of the Youth Offending Service found that assessment of young people's vulnerability was poor in a significant number of cases and the risk of serious harm for offenders and young people subject to custodial sentences was not always assessed accurately.

21. There has been a significant reorganisation of social care provision with the move to multi-disciplinary neighbourhood teams. Although it is too early to judge their full impact, there is effective multi-agency work and some emerging evidence of improved practice leading to more coherent and effective casework and better access and early intervention for vulnerable children and their families. There is a lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities of middle managers within the new management structure and the council is reviewing

this. In 2007, a new child protection investigation team was put in place but had insufficient capacity to fulfil its remit and, as a result, provided an inadequate service. Although capacity of the team has now been strengthened, it remains fragile. In recent years, many areas of social care have been characterised by high staff turnover and constant change. Nevertheless, front-line staff remain highly committed and have good morale. Although capacity overall is now improving, for example though the mentoring support to new managers, there is still considerable reliance on agency staff.

22. Children's services have made some progress with regard to the 2007 APA recommendation to review thresholds for referral and assessment. However, despite the fact that referrals have decreased, assessment and referral arrangements are not consistently well managed and this is compounded by the number of different 'entry points' into the service. Thresholds for each 'entry point' are not fully understood by staff in children's services and across the partnership and referrals are not always dealt with effectively. This has resulted in a significant increase in the re-referral rate which is now above statistical neighbours. The number of initial and core assessments has risen from a low base and the majority of referrals now lead to initial assessments, which represents good performance. However, the quality of assessment and planning is inadequate, despite some evidence of very recent improvement. Performance in meeting and accurately recording timescales for initial and core assessments is inadequate and there is delay in assessment, planning and action in a significant minority of cases.

23. Following a review of thresholds, the number of children with child protection plans has increased. All children with child protection plans are allocated a qualified social worker. However, the quality of child protection work is inadequate with evidence of drift and a lack of decisiveness in too many cases. Thresholds for when children should be subject to a child protection plan are not consistently understood by partner agencies. Timescales for child protection reviews are not always met. Attendance at child protection conferences has been poor in a significant minority of cases. Management oversight of child protection work is inadequate.

24. The unsatisfactory quality of social care recording, combined with an inadequate electronic database and recording system, creates significant risk. Key information, such as chronologies, is not always available and readily accessible in case files. This makes it difficult for new staff or managers to access important information swiftly. Too often, case recordings examined by inspectors failed to clarify the purpose of visits, what was achieved and whether a child had been seen alone. The council recognises the weakness of its electronic recording system and plans are underway to introduce the Integrated Children's System later this year. There has been recent improvement in the analysis of data; however performance monitoring by front-line managers is insufficient with no systematic approach to the auditing of social care files. Although social care staff have regular supervision and good access to informal

support, which they value highly, supervision records do not always provide a clear analysis of individual cases, decisions, actions and timescales.

25. The effectiveness of the work of the LSCB is inadequate. Monitoring arrangements are poor. Auditing and evaluation of safeguarding are insufficient and have not been carried out systematically in children's social care and across partner agencies. The board has failed to oversee effectively the quality of child protection work and there are significant weaknesses in the management of the recent Serious Case Review. Safe recruitment guidance is not followed consistently. Key weaknesses were highlighted during the inspection, such as the significant minority of children's services staff without Criminal Record Bureau or appropriate police checks, and the inconsistent application of internal recruitment processes. The council has taken prompt action and a detailed plan is being implemented to tackle these deficiencies. Monitoring of safe recruitment practices across the partnership by the LSCB has been insufficient. However, there are very early signs of improvement. Safeguarding training has been delivered to staff across the area. Sound procedures for child protection and reviewing child deaths are in place. The council has been slow to implement the national minimum standards for private fostering. A dedicated sub-group of the LSCB has now been established to give greater emphasis to this work.

26. Services are in place for families affected by domestic abuse but have not been evaluated. The partnership has not completed an analysis of need arising from domestic abuse information and does not have a domestic violence strategy. However, the training programme on domestic violence is helping to raise awareness and increase the profile of this work. Multi-agency panels assess levels of risk effectively and ensure appropriate support is available. Multi-agency public protection arrangements are effective.

Looked after children and young people



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good multi-agency working and committed staff.</p> <p>Good access to high quality mental health services.</p>	<p>Too few children in stable long-term placements.</p> <p>High proportion and costs of placements outside the area.</p>

<p>Good participation of children and young people in their reviews.</p> <p>Good support in making a positive contribution to society.</p> <p>Good provision for care leavers moving into education, employment or training.</p>	<p>Lack of robust challenge of care planning and practice by independent reviewing officers.</p> <p>Limited progress in reducing overall absence rates of looked after children.</p> <p>Low proportion of looked after children who have annual dental checks.</p>
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28. Support to prevent children and young people becoming looked after is adequate. The number of looked after children is low and considerably below the national average and that of similar authorities. Thresholds for children and young people entering care are clear and appropriate. Where children and young people are identified as at risk of entering care, the council provides effective and intensive packages of support to individual families.

29. Health provision for looked after children and young people is adequate. Looked after children have good access to high quality mental health services. Good progress has been made in improving access to regular health assessments, which was a weakness at the 2007 APA, and is now in line with similar areas. By contrast, the proportion receiving annual dental checks has fallen below statistical neighbours and is very low. The dedicated nurse for looked after children links effectively with other agencies and provides a good service, which includes the detection and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, referral for obesity treatment and provision of a smoking cessation programme.

30. Adoption and permanence planning is improving, with a strong emphasis on monitoring and ensuring good quality permanency arrangements. The number of special guardianship orders and adoptions has fluctuated over the last two years, with inconsistent performance above and below similar areas. In 2008 to date, eight decisions have been made in the best interests of children to be adopted and this represents the most achieved by the council in any one year. Opportunities for special guardianship have been pursued appropriately following assessment. The latest inspections judged the adoption service as good and the fostering service as adequate with good features. The fostering service has improved further since then and undertaken a thorough revision of the fostering strategy which led to increased allowances and improved support and training for carers. Recent action to improve the range of local foster placements has been effective, with 10 new foster carers approved since November 2007. Placements for Black and minority ethnic children meet current demand and appropriate targets are set and reviewed each year in line with population changes.

31. There have been significant improvements in the last year in services for looked after children. From a low base, the council has made marked progress in improving placement stability, ensuring that children have placements nearer to their family homes and reducing the proportion in residential care. However, a high proportion of looked after children and young people are still placed outside the area. In 2006-07, Wokingham had the highest weekly expenditure for looked after children in the country, although the cost of placements is now falling. Some of these costs are due to appropriate and longstanding specialist provision for children whose complex needs cannot be met locally. A strategy to reduce the high number and high cost of placements out of the area is now in place. The strategy is also designed to improve the stability of placements, which remains below similar areas and the national average. Significant investment has been made in developing a new four-bedded residential home which is close to opening. The council has introduced systems to improve value for money and the level of packages of care required. It is now part of a national benchmarking group to make improvements in the commissioning process.

32. The participation of children and young people in their reviews continues to be very good. However, as a result of insufficient monitoring and challenge within the review process, the timeliness of reviews fell significantly last year from 90% to 67%, which represents inadequate performance. An audit of looked after children's files, conducted in June 2008 by independent reviewing officers, found a wide inconsistency of practice in care planning and contact arrangements. The council is taking appropriate action to improve procedures and to ensure that previously good performance is restored. Recent unvalidated data shows a much improved picture.

33. There is high morale amongst front-line staff and a demonstrable commitment to new multi-disciplinary working. All looked after children have a named social worker. The council maintains an adequate service, although resources remain stretched at operational and management level.

34. The educational achievement of looked after children and young people is satisfactory. While the proportion achieving five or more GCSE A* to C grades in 2007 was well below that of their peers in Wokingham, all seven young people who took GCSEs achieved at least one A* to G grade. Satisfactory progress was made from a low base and all exceeded their target grades. The appointment of a virtual headteacher and a senior manager to champion the cause of looked after children and young people has led to significant improvements in provision and effective individualised support. Educational progress is now tracked more rigorously. Partners are working closely to ensure that intervention strategies are promptly put in place to support looked after children and minimise any disruption to learning. The unvalidated examination results for 2008 show a significant and improving trend in performance. However, this work has not yet had the same positive impact on improving school attendance as the overall absence record has increased.

35. Looked after children and young people are supported well in making a positive contribution. The quality of care provided to looked after children is adequate and improving. The looked after children and young people who met with inspectors were positive about the care provided by the council. They receive good support to express their opinions and confirmed that they were able to report concerns as necessary. There is good support and encouragement to participate in a range of enjoyable leisure activities. Good progress has been made in reducing further the very small proportion of looked after children who receive a final warning or conviction which was identified as an area for improvement in the 2007 APA.

36. Corporate parenting has developed a much higher profile. The Corporate Parenting group has a committed and effective leadership that encourages a 'pushy parent' role for the group. Looked after children and young people are consulted regularly. Their views have led to some notable improvements in provision, for example the development of the leisure pass and the support for those who go to university. The children's rights service provides effective advocacy work for looked after children and young people who need additional support.

37. Young people have good support to achieve economic well-being. Care leavers are prepared well for independence by a multi-disciplinary team which provides good assistance with accommodation, health, education, training and employment. The Pathways to Employment scheme provides effective training for care leavers and the current pilot of NVQ accreditation is innovative and creative. Looked after young people and care leavers have good access to a range of personal and welfare support and their social development is good.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Inadequate Adequate Good Outstanding

38. **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
Good multi-agency working to support families, children and young people.	Long waiting times for assessment for some specialist therapies.

<p>Good health care for children with complex needs.</p> <p>Good impact from preventative early intervention work.</p> <p>Good attainment and opportunities for participation in leisure and recreation.</p> <p>Outstanding provision in special schools.</p> <p>Comprehensive planning for transition to adulthood.</p>	<p>Limited range of post-16 education and training provision at entry level and for young people with the most complex needs.</p> <p>Insufficient short break provision to meet the full range of needs.</p>
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39. Health care for children and young people with complex needs is good. The integrated service for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well led and managed. An experienced complex needs team comprises a wide range of professionals, special educational needs workers and health staff. The team is notified promptly following identification, and services cooperate well to identify and resource needs. Close work with the sensory needs team and a seconded specialist nurse from the Primary Care Trust ensures effective communication and information sharing. Good and carefully tailored services in children and young people's homes minimise disruption to family life. Community nurses provide good and timely support to children with complex needs, palliative care and life-limiting illnesses. The bereavement service supports parents well. There is good capacity in health and social care services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, waiting times for assessment for occupational therapy, physiotherapy and speech and language therapy are long for some children in mainstream schools.

40. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities appear safe. Well-established multi-disciplinary working is building a good understanding between professionals. Good communication enables workers to respond flexibly to provide holistic support for children and families. Referral criteria for social care services are well understood by parents and partner agencies. A few children experience frequent changes in social worker. Some excellent short break care opportunities are available and well used. Voluntary sector partners provide good support to siblings through a dedicated youth group. However, overall, there is insufficient short break care to meet the full range of needs. Partners identify, for example, that overnight specialist provision is in particular demand. Regional partnership work under the Aiming High programme is mapping future needs and developing services. Good take-up of direct payments is enabling families to make more flexible arrangements to suit their needs.

41. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have many good opportunities to enjoy and achieve. At school, children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve better than most peers in other areas. Very effective action has reduced the gap in attainment between this group and other children. In 2007, GCSE achievement for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was very good. Over 95% achieved one or more grades and the proportion with five A* to C grades was the fourth highest nationally. Outstanding special schools share their expertise effectively to develop capacity across the borough. School inspections show that the proportion of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities making good or better progress is above the national average and that of similar areas. Good early intervention has enabled many more children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to thrive in inclusive specialist units in mainstream schools. The proportion of children with statements of special educational need is generally in line with similar areas and falling. Local data show that nearly all statements of special educational need are prepared promptly. An innovative profiling tool helps schools to produce clear, comprehensive and systematic definitions of need and to put in place appropriate packages of support. The council provides effective support and challenge to schools and data is used well to monitor children's progress.

42. Information and interventions to support parents and teachers are good. A highly effective multi-disciplinary EarlyBird programme helps parents of young children on the autistic spectrum to communicate better and manage behaviour. Early notification of new diagnosis ensures places are offered promptly. A specialist crèche is provided for participants. Follow-up support is particularly good with a well-established mentoring group for parents. Training for school staff and work with children to manage their emotions and develop positive behaviours have been very effective in reducing previously high permanent and fixed-term exclusion rates for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. More training is planned to improve awareness of autistic spectrum disorders in the community.

43. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have many good opportunities to participate in leisure and recreation. Over 370 members of the Children with Additional Needs (CAN) network receive concessions for a wide range of facilities. The Me2 club provides well-supported volunteers to facilitate inclusion in activities such as scouting and shopping. Many clubs provide specialist evening and weekend activities. The excellent Extreme Explorers, a partnership between the youth service and a special school, develops young people's independence and capability very creatively. Forty disabled young people achieved a bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award over the last three years.

44. Children and young people's views are taken into account in planning services and arrangements to consult children and families are effective. The special school's exceptionally detailed methodology ensures that young people can contribute effectively to reviews. Elements have been replicated in other

contexts, for instance in short break care, to communicate with non-verbal children. Children receive good support to manage changes in their lives through mentoring and counselling from voluntary sector providers. The authority has carefully planned arrangements to support children with emotional and behavioural difficulties and staff in a secondary school which is due to close.

45. Most children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well prepared for an independent life. Support from Connexions is good. The percentage not in education, employment or training at 16 is well below average, although higher than other young people. Access to good education and training opportunities develops young people's skills and employability. A very active education business partnership sponsors effective mentors from local companies to support young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to access work experience. Many placements have led to employment. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities form a large proportion of those studying vocational options and achieve well above their peers in other areas. The authority had rightly identified that the range of post-16 provision at entry level and for young people with the most complex needs is limited and regional partnerships are mapping future requirements. A new Entry to Employment course provides training for 25 young people in accessible industrial premises. Further vocational options, including a post-14 learning centre, are planned.

46. Planning for transition to adulthood is extremely thorough. Beginning early, a multi-disciplinary assessment on every aspect of a child's life is updated at every review. From age 16, an assigned adult social care worker ensures continuity and consistency. Appropriate professionals regularly discuss progress with the young person and their family. Information recorded in reviews and moving-on plans is detailed and well focused, enabling timely services to be put in place. Innovative approaches to housing and care arrangements make excellent use of resources. A targeted service from the voluntary sector provides effective advice and guidance to parents.

Other issues identified for further investigation

The impact of the partners' strategy for improving the provision of CAMHS

47. **The impact of the partners' strategy for improving the provision of CAMHS is inadequate.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
Effective partnership work in commissioning current services.	Slow progress in developing the new CAMHS strategy and service specification.

<p>Good multi-agency working at a local level.</p> <p>Effective promotion of emotional health and well-being in schools and community settings.</p> <p>Good support and treatment for children and young people with emotional and mental health problems.</p>	<p>Comprehensive needs analysis not yet complete.</p> <p>Insufficient consultation with children, young people and families to inform planning and development.</p> <p>Limited expertise in a few specialist areas of work.</p>
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48. The 2007 APA identified the need to improve the provision of CAMHS and noted that complex financial arrangements and budget pressures had resulted in some key posts in the service being frozen. The council and its partners are undertaking a full review of CAMHS to inform the development of a new strategy, however overall progress is slow. Partners share clear ambitions to improve access and prioritise preventative services, particularly for schools, through the development of locality and neighbourhood CAMHS teams. Partnership work in commissioning current services has been good. The well-established West Berkshire commissioning group takes a strong lead in planning and commissioning CAMHS with the council.

49. Partners acknowledge gaps in provision and are taking action to reorganise the service. The agreement between the council and health partners under section 31 of the Health and Social Care Act (2001) for the provision of CAMHS was disbanded at the end of March 2008. This is enabling the council to focus resources on preventative work and health partners to focus on improving specialist CAMHS. Some primary CAMHS staff have now been deployed to support multi-agency neighbourhood teams. Although partners are clear that changes need to be made, progress had been slow in developing a comprehensive needs-based strategy and agreeing detailed contracts for the continuation and further development of services. A draft strategy and service specification have been drawn up but do not fit coherently together. Work is now underway to align key strategic planning documents; however, the needs assessment undertaken in 2006 is only just being updated. The current strategy takes insufficient account of the full range of needs and the partners have yet to consult children, young people and families to inform planning and development. As a result, there is insufficient clarity about future requirements. In addition, front-line staff are increasingly concerned about the security of their jobs, particularly those on temporary contracts up to March 2009.

50. Universal services make a good contribution to promoting children and young people's emotional and social well-being. The Healthy Schools programme is highly successful and good practice developed in primary schools through the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme is being rolled out to secondary schools. A counselling service provided by the voluntary sector is very well used and offers good support to children and

young people, for example on bullying and substance misuse issues. Counselling is provided in all secondary schools and five community venues and the service also trains young people as peer mentors. Young people have good access to information, advice and support through the Health Zones in secondary schools provided in partnership with the Primary Care Trust and the youth service.

51. Staff in neighbourhood teams and in universal services are adequately supported by CAMHS to enable them to identify and support children and young people with emotional and mental health problems and to make appropriate referrals. A satisfactory consultation service is available to professionals via a helpline. A good range of training in areas such as depression, eating disorders, domestic violence and self-harm is facilitated by CAMHS staff and helps to raise awareness of issues impacting on the lives of vulnerable children and young people. The support available to those working with children and young people in managing critical incidents is good. For example, the 'Daisy's Dream' programme provides helpful guidance to teachers and other professionals on bereavement support. Schools judge CAMHS as effective in meeting the needs of children and young people but are rightly concerned about the timeliness of some interventions.

52. The specialist team of CAMHS practitioners provides a wide range of services to children and young people which are appropriately prioritised. Looked after children and young people receive good and timely support. Good therapeutic services are provided and include therapy for families of looked after children, kinship care and post-abuse support. Children and young people with complex needs, such as those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and complex Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, receive good support from the parenting team in local clinics or in their homes. Parents speak positively about the work of the team as well as the family therapy service. However, a significant number of these services are not underpinned by up-to-date service specifications that clearly identify all vulnerable groups and the level of support they need. The lack of clarity about the future is impacting adversely on staff recruitment, retention and workloads, as well as the waiting times for some services. Interim measures have been put in place to try to improve access, such as the new appointment system, but it is too early to judge their impact.

53. CAMHS provides a good service for most children and young people with severe mental health problems, including in-patient and out-patient specialist provision. Planning for transition to adult services is improving and multi-agency meetings are held regularly to ensure a smooth transfer. Good access to specialist CAMHS professionals for children admitted to accident and emergency units of general hospitals is available 24-hours a day through an on-call system to consultant CAMHS psychiatrists. However, accident and emergency staff are insufficiently clear about the eligibility criteria for 16–18 year olds who are not in full-time education or training. The Primary Care Trust is taking action to address this. Partners recognise, rightly, that there is limited expertise in a few

specialist areas of work, for example with young people involved in, or on the edges of, the youth justice system.

Service management



Capacity to improve



54. The management of services for children and young people is adequate. Capacity to improve further is adequate.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>High educational attainment.</p> <p>Renewed emphasis on ‘success for all’ rather than ‘success for most’.</p> <p>Locality and multi-agency working implemented successfully.</p> <p>Effective consultation and engagement with children and young people.</p>	<p>Constant change, stretched management capacity and limited social care expertise impacting on effective prioritisation.</p> <p>Weak aspects of strategic management and incomplete strategic plans.</p> <p>Insufficient prioritisation of equality and diversity.</p> <p>Significant weaknesses, including performance monitoring, in social care services and safeguarding.</p>

55. The management of services for children and young people in Wokingham is adequate. Universal services and outcomes for most children and young people in Wokingham are good. Educational attainment is among the highest in the country. Past financial management and aspects of social care monitoring have been inadequate. The focus of councillors and officers has been weak in some aspects of social care, although this is now improving. Neighbourhood-based multi-agency working has been implemented successfully and is improving access and early intervention.

56. Ambitions for children and young people are adequate overall. Although ambitions are high, they are not universally understood. Council and partners’ aspirations are clearly stated within the priority ‘Excellent Children’s Services

and Skills for All'. Services for children and young people are underpinned by a shared strategic vision in the recently reviewed and improved Children and Young People's Plan. This includes shared objectives and targets based on need and consultation with partners, parents, carers, children and young people. Ambitions for high quality universal services and for excellent educational attainment have been consistent and successful. As a consequence, Wokingham is one of the top performers nationally in educational attainment. Effective locality working, along with a renewed emphasis on 'success for all' rather than 'success for most', is now beginning to drive service management. However, new ambitions and strategic direction for social care and the most vulnerable children are not yet fully understood by some staff and councillors.

57. Consultation and engagement with children, young people and stakeholders is good. Partners make effective use of this, for example to inform the revised Children and Young People's Plan. Services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for looked after children are based on effective consultation and needs analysis. A new special school has been designed and built in full consultation with stakeholders, including parents and children.

58. Prioritisation is inadequate. Priorities for vulnerable children and social care are not yet clear among staff and councillors. Poor past focus, inconsistent member support, constant change and stretched management capacity have resulted in a fire-fighting and reactive management style. This has hindered effective prioritisation. Some key issues have not been recognised in a timely manner and, as a result, have taken longer to rectify, for example in social care practice, safeguarding and financial management. Prioritisation in these areas by the senior leadership team and councillors has been ineffective and, in the case of children's social care, has been the result in part of insufficient expertise and capacity at a senior management level.

59. Improved prioritisation for social care, locally delivered services, preventative services and early intervention for vulnerable children is emerging. There is evidence of matching priorities to manage resources and in taking difficult decisions, for example in the implementation of multi-agency locality working and in addressing and managing effectively a school closure. High level 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. Leadership of the council's corporate parenting group is effective and members have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

60. Some strategies are weak or not yet in place, for example for CAMHS, domestic violence, workforce planning and workforce development and staff recruitment and retention. Plans to deliver the 2008/09 priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan are largely developed, but not yet completed. A service commissioning framework is now in place but does not yet include agreed priorities. Equality and diversity is not sufficiently prioritised. Equality

impact statements are not effective or comprehensive. As a result, the council cannot demonstrate that it has taken account of equality and diversity issues in all services or for all groups.

61. Taken as a whole, capacity in children's services is adequate. Capacity has been strengthened through the formation of an integrated children's service. The effective development and management of children's centres and extended services has improved focus on and capacity in early intervention. Capacity is good in services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for smooth transition into adult services. Capacity has been used effectively to implement the common assessment framework and to improve services in fostering and for looked after children. The management and capacity of the LSCB are inadequate, however there are very early signs of improvement. Multi-disciplinary working has been implemented successfully and front-line staff are well motivated and committed. There is emerging evidence of improved access and early intervention for vulnerable children and their families.

62. Partners have adequate capacity and this is used well to deliver, for example, effective parenting programmes, to significantly reduce the number of excluded pupils and to make good progress in the Healthy Schools programme. Partnership capacity is good and has improved through the development of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. Joint commissioning is developing and has been successful in improving provision, such as in Connexions and in new Traveller's education services. Partnership relationships are well established across public sector agencies and a number of joint-funded posts are in place. Although joint commissioning and pooled budgets are not yet used extensively, there is clear recognition and support for this from partners for the future.

63. Financial capacity is now adequate. Overall financial resources for children's services are in line with similar authorities, although spend on social care for children and families is in the lower quartile and has been since 2004. An additional £1.36million net was allocated in 2008-09 to bring the budget to £20.02million. In 2007, an unexpected overspend was identified. Following investigation by the council's auditors, improved robust controls have been implemented. Finance is now being managed effectively through a shared finance post with the Community Care Directorate and a balanced budget is forecast this year. Positive work to improve financial management is still in progress, but as a result of past ineffective recording, the service is still unable to identify some specific costs, for example, of individual social care packages. This makes it difficult to ensure good value for money and to predict future spending. The cost of residential care places remains high but is falling and appropriate plans are in place to reduce costs further.

64. Staff capacity is adequate overall. However, there has been inadequate capacity in aspects of social care services, where recruitment and retention issues have affected the consistency, timeliness and quality of core

assessments and case management. Earlier this year, almost 30% of social worker posts were unfilled and the additional cost this year of agency staff is estimated at £207,000. The council has put in place a range of measures to fill posts, with some success. Staff turnover is now reducing and early indications are that key social care posts will be filled. Training has not been prioritised adequately, both in terms of capacity for staff to attend training and in the resources allocated to it. Strategic workforce planning is not embedded. The service does not take a holistic view of workforce development in order to grow its own skilled workforce. A basic workforce strategy and a recruitment and retention strategy are in place, but these are not yet effective in driving improvement.

65. Performance management is adequate overall. At the highest levels, for example in monitoring of national indicators, staff appraisal and education services, performance management works well. This has helped drive good performance in schools. Performance monitoring procedures, however, are inadequate in some aspects of service monitoring, for example in safeguarding and safe recruitment. Focused action is now being taken to tackle identified weaknesses. There are some well-established and effective elements of performance monitoring, such as good special educational needs profiling and good use of data to track the educational progress of children and children from minority groups. However, data collection systems remain inconsistent in a mix of paper-based and ICT systems, making it harder to obtain a clear picture of performance. This is now being addressed. Performance management of the Local Area Agreement is effective but shared performance management arrangements with partners and internal scrutiny are underdeveloped.

66. Capacity to improve further is adequate. The area has a good track record of improvement in education, universal services and in some specialist service areas. Management and leadership are improving through a strengthened senior leadership team in children's services. Partnership arrangements are improving, with good awareness of what needs to be done. There is good support and active engagement from all stakeholders. Focused action is now being taken to improve safeguarding, social care management systems and processes. A new Integrated Children's Services IT system for social care performance management is being implemented later this year. The council has increased resources to improve capacity for looked after children and fostering. A new residential home is close to opening, which is designed to improve quality of care and reduce costs.

67. Recent service management changes and procedures are not yet fully embedded and further change is needed to improve management and staff capacity, prioritisation and stability. Nevertheless, the service has turned a corner and a new, more open and supportive culture is emerging. The council's new leadership and new chief executive share a clear view and support the need for improvement. Partners, managers and staff are aware of the significant challenges ahead and are taking decisive action. Key to this has been the successful implementation of neighbourhood working and the move to

integrated delivery and prevention. This clearly demonstrates that the council and partners can deliver further improvement.

Annex A

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

The full annual performance assessment for 2008, which was published on 17 December 2008, can be found at:

[http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_download/\(id\)/4776/\(as\)/APA/apa_2008_872.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_download/(id)/4776/(as)/APA/apa_2008_872.pdf)

Annex B: Summary of the enhanced youth inspection report

Main findings

1. The quality of youth work provision in Wokingham is adequate and the local authority sufficiently secures its provision. Youth work practice and young people's achievement are adequate. Young people participate with enthusiasm, attend regularly and form strong relationships with workers and their peers. They achieve well through the international programme and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. However in most projects, there is insufficient assessment of young people's starting points and programmes are not sufficiently tailored to need. Accreditation is underdeveloped. Young people are consulted for their ideas but there are few examples of active participation in decision-making at borough and service-wide level. The vision for IYSS is established and well supported by staff and partners. Although steady progress has been made in developing targeted youth support, the implementation of IYSS is slow overall. The recent introduction of a management information system and quality assurance framework does not yet sufficiently inform service planning. The council's safe recruitment practices are not always followed consistently and action is now being taken to address this. The relatively low level of local authority funding for youth work is enhanced by good income generation. Youth workers are not always deployed efficiently and effectively and too few youth support workers achieve relevant qualifications. Partnership and multi-agency working better enables the youth service to work with more diverse groups of young people and enriches the overall programme on offer. The curriculum framework links well to *the Every Child Matters* outcomes but there is insufficient oversight to ensure consistently high quality youth work practice across the service.

Key aspect inspection grades

Key Aspect		Grade
1	Standards of young people's achievement	2
	Quality of youth work practice	2
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 participate well in youth work activities, are enthusiastic and standards of behaviour are high.
- Youth workers deliver some very effective group work programmes with more vulnerable young people
- The strong curriculum framework links effectively to *Every Child Matters* outcomes.
- Accommodation for youth work is good.
- Staff are committed, enthusiastic and morale is high.

Areas for development

- Accelerate the implementation of IYSS.
- Ensure that youth work practice is better planned to enable young people to learn more.
- Strengthen the involvement of young people in decision-making.
- Increase the number of youth support workers achieving qualifications.
- Improve the use of management information to inform planning and target setting.
- Ensure the council's safe recruitment policy is implemented consistently.

Annex C

CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE¹

1. Outcomes for most children and young people in Wokingham are good. However, outcomes for some of the most vulnerable children and young people vary from good to inadequate. Although many services are good, the contribution of the council and its partners to improving support and provision for children at risk or requiring safeguarding is inadequate. Children and young people enjoy generally good health. Levels of educational attainment are among the highest in the country, however some children and young people from vulnerable groups do not achieve as well as their peers. Opportunities for children and young people to make a positive contribution and to achieve economic well-being are good. The combined work of local services in improving outcomes for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, but is only adequate for children and young people who are looked after.

2. The management of services for children and young people in Wokingham is adequate. The revised Children and Young People's Plan reflects the council's renewed emphasis on 'success for all' rather than 'success for most'. Consultation and engagement with children, young people and stakeholders are effective. Locality and multi-agency working has been implemented successfully and is improving access and early intervention for vulnerable children. Partnership relationships are well established across public sector agencies. Constant change and stretched management capacity has led to fire-fighting and reactivity which has hindered effective prioritisation by service managers. Capacity overall is adequate. Decisive action is now being taken to tackle significant weaknesses in safeguarding and aspects of the social care service, but there is still much to do. Performance management is adequate, although performance monitoring is not yet effective in all areas. The capacity to improve further is adequate.

3. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Effective health promotion encourages and supports healthy eating and active lifestyles. Teenage pregnancy rates are low. Good impact from preventative early intervention is evident in many aspects of the lives of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The quality of specialist services and support for children and families with mental health difficulties are good. However, the impact of the partners' strategy on improving provision of CAMHS is inadequate. Slow progress had been made in revising the strategic plan, completing a detailed analysis of need and consulting children, young people and families. Health provision for looked after children is adequate.

¹ Judgements contained in the corporate assessment of children's services are based on a combination of the outcomes of the joint area review and the latest published annual performance assessment (APA 2007) available at the time of the inspection.

4. Children and young people appear safe, however the contribution of all local services to improving outcomes for children and young people at risk or requiring safeguarding is inadequate. Fundamental aspects of safeguarding are inadequate, including key elements of children's social care. The quality of child protection work is inadequate with evidence of drift and a lack of decisiveness in too many cases. Assessment and recording are poor. Auditing, evaluation and analysis of safeguarding in children's social care and across partner agencies are inadequate. There are significant weaknesses in the work and management of the LCSB and in safe recruitment processes. There is some evidence of very recent improvements in practice; however, these are not embedded and the impact has not been evaluated. Early intervention and preventative services are good. Provision in extended schools and children's centres has been strengthened further by improving partnership work across the borough.

5. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and to achieve well is good. The quality of childcare and early years provision is good. Levels of educational attainment are among the highest in the country. Some vulnerable groups continue to underachieve, but progress in being made in closing the attainment gap. Standards at all key stages have been consistently above national average for some years. Attainment at GCSE is good and improving; unvalidated GCSE results for 2008 show that this track record has been maintained. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve better at school than their peers in other areas. Looked after children make satisfactory progress at school. Effective action has been taken to reduce exclusions overall, although children from some minority ethnic groups are disproportionately excluded. Children who are unable to attend school receive high quality alternative education.

6. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to make a positive contribution to society is good. Overall levels of crime are low and offending by looked after children and young people has fallen and is now low. Targeted interventions are helping to tackle anti-social behaviour. The proportion of young people aged 13–19 in contact with the youth service is in line with the national target and the quality of provision is adequate. A high proportion of looked after children and young people participate in their reviews and there is good support and encouragement to help them take part in leisure activities. The views of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are taken into account in planning provision.

7. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to achieve economic well-being is good. A high proportion of young people continue in further education and achieve Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications compared to the national average. The number of young people who are not in education, employment or training is low. Looked after young people are well prepared for independence by the care leaving service and have good access to advice and support. Thorough planning for transition to adulthood ensures that young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are also well

supported. An expanding range of good provision develops their skills and employability, however the choice is more limited in post-16 education and training at entry level and for those with the most complex needs.

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 Wokingham 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).