



Pilot joint area review of children's services

West Sussex Children's Services Authority Area

**Better
education
and care**

Inspection of services for children and young people

Adult Learning Inspectorate
Audit Commission
Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)
Healthcare Commission
HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
HM Inspectorate of Court Administration
HM Inspectorate of Prisons
HM Inspectorate of Probation
Ofsted

Published	Reference no.

© Crown copyright 2005

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the local authority

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	4
Context	5
SUMMARY REPORT	6
MAIN REPORT	11
Outcomes for children and young people	11
Impact of local public services	13
Being healthy	13
Staying safe	15
Enjoying and achieving	17
Making a positive contribution	18
Economic well-being	21
Service management	23
Recommendations	26
APPENDIX:	
1. KEY JUDGEMENTS SELECTED FOR FIELDWORK	28
2. CONTRIBUTING TO COUNCIL SERVICES	30
3. YOUTH INSPECTION REPORT	32

INTRODUCTION

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 seven inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), the Healthcare Commission (CHAI), 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 its findings 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 West Sussex area and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well being. 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.

4. The review evaluates the collective contribution made to each outcome for children and young people by relevant services in the area. It also judges the contributions made by the council's services overall and, specifically, its education and children's social care services. Particular attention is given to joint action by local services on behalf of those groups of children and young people who are vulnerable to poor outcomes. Two such groups are covered in detail: children and young people who are looked after by the council; and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

5. The review took place in two stages consisting in total of three weeks over a six-week period. The first stage reviewed all existing evidence including:

- self-assessment undertaken by local public service providers;
- a survey of children and young people;
- performance data;
- the findings of the contemporaneous inspection of the youth service ;
- planning documents;
- information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day care provision; and
- briefings from staff within inspectorates, commissions and other public bodies in contact with local providers.

6. The second stage included inspection fieldwork. This included studies of how far local services have improved outcomes for a small sample of children and young people, some of whom have the most complex needs, and a study of provision in one neighbourhood in Littlehampton. It also included gathering

evidence on seven key judgements, selected because of their critical importance to improving outcomes for children and young people in the local area. This included discussions with elected members of the local authority and their equivalents in other public agencies, officers from these agencies, service users, and community representatives. The seven key judgements are listed in an annex to this report.

CONTEXT

7. West Sussex is a large, relatively diverse county in the south of England. It is predominantly rural and generally affluent but with a few areas of social and economic disadvantage. Over half of the county is within designated areas of outstanding natural beauty. The majority of the population lives in small and medium sized towns along the south coast (Chichester, Bognor Regis, Littlehampton and Worthing), and on the eastern and north eastern edges (Crawley and Horsham). Some people living in rural communities face difficulties in accessing facilities and services as a result of limited public transport.

8. Rural areas and many of the towns are generally prosperous and levels of disadvantage are low overall. However, a total of seven wards in Crawley and along the coastal strip are in the 10% most disadvantaged wards nationally. The proportion of the population that is of working age is well below the southern regional average and unemployment is amongst the lowest in the country. However, rural areas have been adversely affected by changes in the agricultural economy and there are many low paid and low skills jobs along the coastal strip and around Gatwick airport.

9. The population is generally older than in other parts of England. Worthing has the highest proportion of over 85 year olds in the country and only Crawley has a population that is younger than the national average. Overall, the population is also less ethnically diverse than the southern region and nationally with over 94% being of White British heritage. Again Crawley, where almost 14% of the population is of Asian origin, is an exception. There is also a sizeable Portuguese population in Littlehampton associated with agricultural activity.

10. The West Sussex strategic partnership includes the county, district and borough councils; five primary care and four NHS acute trusts plus the health and social care trust which provides mental health services; the Sussex police force; the local Learning and Skills Council; the Connexions service; and a number of private, community and voluntary organisations. It has recently published a community strategy setting out county wide strategic objectives to improve the quality of life for all people in the county. In addition, each district has a local strategic partnership and an individual community strategy that deals with issues which affect a single district.

11. West Sussex county council currently provides services for children and young people through its education and arts directorate and its social and caring directorate. The council has embarked upon a major initiative to transform its services for children in order to better meet their needs. The structure for future working is provided by the families and schools support service which is accountable through both directorates and to the chief executive. During this joint area review, following the county council elections in May 2005, a cabinet portfolio for Children's Services was identified and a director of Children's Services appointed. The county council has seven strategically situated social care offices. It maintains 301 schools including four nursery schools, 231 primary schools, 11 middle schools deemed primary, 3 middle schools deemed secondary, 37 secondary schools of which 22 have sixth forms, 13 special schools and two pupil referral units. The area is currently making provision for over 700 looked after children including almost 100 unaccompanied asylum seekers. Housing and leisure services are provided through district councils.

12. The West Sussex Children's Trust was launched in 2004, one of 35 national pilot trusts. Its purpose is to draw together key partners such as the NHS primary care, acute and health and social care trusts; the police; the Learning and Skills council; and Connexions, at both the strategic planning level and as direct providers of services. The Trust has drafted a set of shared priorities to identify the key contributions from individual agencies to the outcomes for children and young people in *Every Child Matters*. The council has been awarded Beacon Council Status for integrated children's services in 2005/6.

SUMMARY REPORT

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for most children and young people in West Sussex are positive. From the evidence gathered, children and young people appear safe. Good quality childcare places are available to all who require them. The educational standards achieved by most children and young people are good overall but they are lower along the coastal strip and in Crawley. The gap in attainment between the majority of children and young people and those who are looked after is wider than is found nationally. Most children and young people behave responsibly and some make significant contributions to their schools and the areas in which they live. Young people are prepared well for working life. They are more likely to be in education, employment or training than elsewhere in the country. Young people leaving the care of the local authority sometimes have difficulties finding affordable, adequate housing. The majority of children and young people are healthy. A small number of children and young people with mental health problems wait for too long for

the help they need. Too many children with complex needs are educated out of the county.

The impact of local services

Local services have a beneficial impact on outcomes for most children and young people. The findings of this review corroborate most of the judgements reached by the authority and its partners in their self assessment. Health education and provision are good, except for recognised weaknesses with some child and adolescent mental health services. The most vulnerable children and young people are safeguarded well from abuse and exploitation. The council and its partners work effectively to provide children and young people with high quality education and training and to enable them to play an active part in their schools and communities. However, educational provision for looked after children and those excluded from school is inadequate. Looked after children and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are not always involved sufficiently in decisions about their futures. Consultation with children and young people is wide-ranging, but not well co-ordinated.

West Sussex County Council and its partners have a clear and ambitious vision to transform, and improve further, services for children and young people. The foundations for putting this vision into practice are securely in place and developments are on track. The capacity for further improvement is good. Services are well managed and resources are, generally, sufficient. A shortage of qualified social workers reduces the amount and continuity of support for some children and young people. Social and caring services do not have sufficiently consistent and robust quality assurance procedures in place.

Being healthy

13. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good and partnership working between agencies across the county is generally strong. Young children and their parents and carers receive good support. Immunisation programmes are in place and take up rates are high. The early identification and assessment of children's health needs is effective. Health education programmes on sexual health, substance misuse, healthy eating, physical activity and emotional well being are promoted well by schools and the council. 'Investors in Health'. However, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) across the county are under-resourced and not co-ordinated sufficiently well. As a result, some children and young people wait a long time for services providing early intervention.

Staying safe

14. **The overall contribution of services to keeping children and young people safe is adequate, with some important strengths.** Those most at risk of abuse or other serious harm are protected well by multi-agency work with the council giving a strong lead. Arrangements for those on the child protection register are secure. Steps taken to minimise the incidence of child abuse and neglect are effective. The number of children and young people on the child protection register is in line with the national average. Despite some shortcomings within the council's social and caring services, pragmatic action by managers keeps children safe. However, the level of vacancies for qualified social workers reduces the continuity and consistency of support for some children and young people. Some, including care leavers, do not have an allocated social worker. Furthermore, there are no consistently implemented procedures for assuring the quality of casework or auditing case files of children and young people. Re-referrals are increasing in line with the national picture.

Enjoy and achieve

15. **The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good.** The council works effectively with its partners to provide a wide range of opportunities for education and enjoyment. Universal educational provision is of good quality. The council supports schools well and this results in very few being judged as causing concern. Currently, educational outcomes for vulnerable groups of children and young people are in line with national averages. However, the gap between the achievement of the majority of children and young people and those who are looked after is wider than elsewhere.

Making a positive contribution

16. **The overall contribution of services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good.** Children and young people are helped to develop socially and emotionally and the range of opportunities for them to take personal responsibility is good. Many opportunities exist for them to participate in decision making and to play an active part in their communities. Some young people in rural areas are prevented from becoming as involved as those in urban areas because of transport difficulties. There is good support for those who face particular challenges such as transition to work or college; young parenthood; and difficulties with drugs and alcohol. Care leavers and those children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, moving from child to adult services, are less well supported. The number of children and young people who offend is low overall but rates of re-offending are slightly higher than those found nationally.

Achieving economic well being

17. **The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people achieve economic well being is good.** Educational outcomes are on the whole positive, although children and young people living in Crawley and along the coastal strip achieve less well. The Connexions service is contributing significantly to the high numbers of young people in education, employment and training, including over 70% of care leavers. Opportunities for them to participate in learning are increasing and broadening. The limited supply of affordable, adequate housing affects most children and young people and in particular care leavers and those leaving secure accommodation.

Support for children looked after

18. Overall, looked after children, receive adequate support particularly from their social workers. A very small number, however, wait too long for a school place. Additional educational support for those who need it, is currently limited and difficult to access, although improvements are being implemented. A number of care leavers use former foster carers' homes as supported lodgings, partly because of the difficulties they face in finding affordable suitable housing. This does not address their longer term housing needs. Looked after children in short term placements experience significant difficulties in accessing CAMHS therapeutic services. This is unsatisfactory.

Support for children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities

19. Overall, children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported adequately and achieve satisfactory educational outcomes. Effective systems are in place to identify children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at an early stage. A single assessment process has not yet been developed. Consultation with children, young people, parents and carers is limited both at an individual level and in terms of policy development. The authority and its partners recognise in their self-evaluation that too many of these children are educated out of county. This is costly and means that they are away from their families and communities. At the time of the review, very small numbers of children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities were not allocated to qualified social workers. Some parents of disabled children find it difficult to access social and care support.

Service management

20. **Overall, the management of services for children and young people is good.** Partnerships are strong at a strategic level: operational links, particularly between health and others are less strong but improving. District councils and the voluntary sector are not yet represented on the Children's Trust Board. The council has established some cross directorate services and is giving a strong lead in developing innovative ways of multi-agency working in

local areas through joint access teams (JATs). Service management within the council is good with effective prioritisation and service delivery. The capacity to improve further is good.

MAIN REPORT

Outcomes for children and young people

21. **Children and young people are generally healthy.** Of those responding to a survey undertaken for this review, a high percentage reported feeling healthy or very healthy. Parents, carers, children and young people receive very good information, support and advice. Rates of teenage pregnancy are low and declining. Rates of breastfeeding are considerably higher than found nationally. There are low rates of childhood illness across the county. Although the proportion of looked after children who have seen a dentist and had a health check in the past 12 months has declined slightly, performance is still very good when compared to national figures. However, there are long waiting times for some child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). Furthermore, a significant number of looked after children in short term placements experience difficulties accessing CAMHS therapeutic services if they need them. This is unsatisfactory.

22. **On the evidence gathered, children and young people appear safe.** Most of those responding to the recently conducted survey said that they feel safe. The proportion on the child protection register is in line with the national average. Rates of re-referrals are increasing in line with the national picture. Appropriate and prompt action is taken to protect children when necessary but for less urgent cases, there can be delays in assessments and thus in the delivery of services. When young people leave care there is a poor range of housing options available to them and one in five does not have an allocated social worker. Furthermore, those with lower levels of learning difficulties and disabilities are not always able to access adult services from social and caring services (SCS).

23. Child protection indicators for health organisations are generally in line with national comparators and for the police they are good. Inspections of early years settings, schools and children's homes show that child protection procedures are satisfactory and often good. Hospital admissions for under-18s are within the expected range and road safety figures are in line with national rates or better.

24. **Children are well prepared for school and most achieve well.** There are sufficient early education and childcare places to meet the needs of children and parents. Areas with the highest levels of deprivation are being given priority for the establishment of neighbourhood nurseries and children's centres which will cater for all children under-five.

25. The educational standards achieved by most children up to the age of 14 are above national averages and those for similar areas. However, there are variations between areas of the county and between different groups of children. Historically, children and young people in Crawley and along the

coastal strip achieve less well than those in the rest of the county. Some progress has been made in reducing the achievement gap but it is uneven. Children and young people who have been excluded from school do not achieve as well as other children. The achievement of looked after children is in line with national figures and it is improving. However, currently the gap in achievement between the majority of children and young people and those who are looked after is wider than elsewhere. A very small number of looked after children and their carers find it difficult to find a local school place quickly enough. The level of attendance of looked after children is in line with national averages but it declined last year.

26. By the age of 16, educational progress overall has slowed and standards are in line with those found across the country. GCSE results have been static for the last five years. However, young people have access to a growing range of relevant, accredited vocational courses which is providing them with additional opportunities to achieve.

27. Children and young people have a good range of opportunities to make decisions and take personal responsibility and many make a positive contribution to their communities. Most children and young people in West Sussex feel that it is easy to have a say in the way things are run at their school. Furthermore, about a half of children and young people surveyed felt that they could have a say in the way things are run in their local area.

28. The majority of children and young people enjoy their education, but a few feel that the behaviour of some pupils affects their ability to learn and enjoy school. School inspections show that they are less likely to suffer from bullying, racism and other forms of harassment in primary and secondary schools than pupils elsewhere in the country. The number of young offenders is low and they are more likely to be in full-time education, training or employment than in other areas. Rates of re-offending are slightly higher than those found nationally.

29. Most young people are able to achieve economic well being and they are prepared well for working life. Many 16 and 17 year olds are in full-time education and the proportion is increasing. Rates of retention are good and improving. The proportion of young people not in education, employment or training is low. However, particularly in the Crawley and Gatwick areas, much of the work available is low-paid or requires a relatively low level of skills. Most young people are affected by the limited supply of affordable, adequate housing. Housing provision for the most vulnerable, such as care leavers and those leaving secure accommodation is variable across the district councils and in some cases is poor.

THE IMPACT OF LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES

Being healthy

30. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good and partnership working between agencies across the county is generally strong.

31. Parents and carers, including teenage mothers, receive well co-ordinated advice about keeping their children healthy. The health needs of children and young people are identified and assessed early through effective surveillance programmes. Take-up rates at age 5 for immunisation programmes are well above national and world health organisation rates. This correlates with low rates of childhood illnesses across the county. The Littlehampton Sure Start programme is very responsive to local needs and requests from parents and carers. Initiatives include a parenting skills course, support for the Portuguese community in Littlehampton and the Wick Information Recreation Education (WIRE) family project, which offers responsive support and advice. The paediatric diabetic team in Worthing and Southlands hospitals NHS trust is particularly effective in involving families in managing their child's care.

32. Children and young people are made aware of risks to their health through a number of successful county wide multi-agency initiatives on sexual health, substance misuse, healthy eating, physical activity and emotional well being, co-ordinated through the West Sussex Healthy Schools programme, 'Investors in Health'. The West Sussex Drug and Alcohol Action Team has made very good progress in meeting national targets to reduce drug and substance misuse. However, progress in reducing the numbers of mothers, including teenage mothers, who smoke is variable across the county. Children and young people have access to a good range of extra-curricular sporting activities. Environmental health risks to children and young people are minimised through a number of effective programmes, including health and safety and road traffic accident prevention schemes.

33. Most indicators of physical health are in line or better than national averages. This is indicative of children and young people's good health across the county. For example, conception rates for under-18 year olds have been consistently below national averages since 1998. Disabled children and young people, and those with life limiting conditions receive thorough and well co-ordinated assessments. They also receive support in specialist centres, including accessible venues within Sure Start and other settings across the county. Littlehampton Sure Start Language Measure is a monitoring service that ensures that children with speech problems are identified and referred to specialist therapy services. The waiting time for access to speech and language therapy in a few areas of the county is too long. In Adur, Arun and Worthing and Crawley higher than average percentages of low birth weight babies and

increasing rates of infant mortality are being monitored and addressed through a range of public health programmes.

34. Access to CAMHS provision varies considerably across the area. Children and young people who use West Sussex CAMHS report that services are good and that staff listen to their views. Access to CAMHS for longer term or intensive in-patient or community outreach care across the county is good. Referrals to CAMHS of children and young people who offend are timely with 100% achievement of the 5 and 10-day targets. Vulnerable teenage mothers access good and beneficial social, peer, professional and practical support services through, for instance, the WIRE project in Littlehampton and across the county through midwifery and health visiting services and support groups. Health visitors, school nurses and General Practitioners (GPs) receive good support from primary care mental health workers to appropriately identify and refer children and young people with physical and mental health problems. However, there are not enough of these workers to ensure effective provision across the whole of West Sussex. Parents and carers find it difficult to access information about CAMHS, and this restricts their ability to make informed choices on services.

35. Nevertheless, there are significant weaknesses with CAMHS which have been recognised by the council and its health partners and which are currently being tackled. They include the lack of access to integrated assessment, treatment and support services for children and young people and their families and access to co-ordinated care. The West Sussex Health and Social Care Trust works well with its partners at a strategic level but joined-up working at the operational level is not yet sufficiently secure. Some agencies are reluctant to commit resources to address staffing shortages and to share information on clients with complex needs.

36. The majority of looked after children are registered with a GP, and are up to date with their immunisations, dental checks and medical assessments. The national guidance on the health of looked after children has not yet been implemented, particularly the replacement of old style medicals with health assessments. The secure children's home has poor access to GP on-call services. This is unacceptable.

37. Children with physical difficulties receive regular medical support. A special needs assessment panel contributes to a co-ordinated approach for promoting the well being of pre-school children with special educational needs through informal support and advice for parents. The Sure Start children's centre in Littlehampton provides good multi-agency support for children, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Staying safe

The overall contribution of services to keeping children and young people safe is adequate with some important strengths. Furthermore, the capacity to improve is good.

38. The steps taken to minimise the incidence of child abuse and neglect in the area have been effective. West Sussex SCS have contributed positively to national developments such as the national register for unaccompanied asylum seekers. Multi-agency public protection arrangements to monitor serious offenders in the community are sound. Child protection is a strong aspect of the work of the police force. Collaboration between the police and the council is good, for example the police refer to SCS all children who are involved in reported cases of domestic violence. All agencies remain concerned about children from abroad arriving through Gatwick airport and subsequently disappearing. They are attempting to identify more effective ways of tackling this complex issue.

39. The area child protection committee (ACPC) is well attended and, increasingly, all agencies recognise their responsibilities. They have responded promptly and appropriately to a recent serious case review. Planning for a local safeguarding children's board is underway. Pan-Sussex ACPC procedures are due to be finalised within 2005: a positive development to ensure cross-boundary consistency. The accommodation needs of vulnerable young people are not being met consistently by district councils and housing associations. The participation of these agencies in the ACPC is inconsistent.

40. Statutory and voluntary agencies have sound child protection procedures, recruitment practices and training programmes. A common understanding of referral thresholds is developing between the different agencies, although the need for further work is recognised.

41. Pragmatic action by managers and staff ensures that children are safe despite some shortcomings within the council's social and caring services. The impact of these was not recognised sufficiently in the area's self-assessment. The vacancy rate for social workers is below that found nationally and in similar authorities. Nevertheless, social work teams vary from those that are fully staffed to those operating with 50% agency staff, which itself increases the pressure on permanent staff. This is a particular concern in Adur where the problem is serious and longstanding. A strategy to address the shortage of social workers has been in place for 18 months. This includes the monitoring of caseloads, unallocated cases, and social worker vacancies by the chief executive, senior officers and the lead elected member on a monthly basis. This has allowed resources to be targeted quickly at emerging areas of concern.

42. Nevertheless, the level of vacancies and the proportion of agency staff in place reduce the amount and continuity of support for some children and young

people, although those most at risk of abuse or serious harm are protected well. All incoming referrals are screened by staff on the SCS helpdesks, monitored constantly by a team manager. A small and decreasing number of initial referrals are unallocated as a result of workload pressures but decisions on these are taken by team managers who keep them under close review. Child protection cases are allocated promptly to qualified social workers. Child protection issues relating to children with learning disabilities are managed adequately by the disability and locality teams. A high proportion of core assessments are completed on time and the proportion of child protection reviews completed on time is good. First-time child protection registrations and re-registrations are at acceptable levels. However, rates of re-referral are increasing in line with the national picture.

43. 77% of looked after children are allocated to a qualified social worker with the remainder being managed adequately by unqualified staff monitored well by a team manager. At the time of the review, two looked after children with learning difficulties or disabilities did not have an allocated social worker. This is unsatisfactory: it is unsettling for children particularly when their reviews are attended by someone they do not know. Furthermore, one in five care leavers does not have an allocated social worker. This is also unsatisfactory.

44. The recently established independent reviewing officer (IRO) team estimates that it will be able to carry out 80% of looked after children's reviews when fully operational. It is currently achieving 70%. All other reviews are chaired by an independent team manager. This is an adequate interim response. Plans for further improvements are in place.

45. There are no consistently implemented council wide procedures for assuring the quality of case work or for auditing case files of children and young people. Case files do not always have summary sheets or chronologies and this makes it difficult to gain a quick understanding of the issues, the history and the current position. Furthermore, the ethnicity of a child or young person is not always indicated on the case file. The authority has stated its intention to improve its response to the needs of children and young people from minority ethnic communities. Introductory training about diversity has been provided but many social workers and team managers report that this is not sufficient for them to provide an equitable and responsive service. There is a shortage of foster carers from these communities.

Enjoying and achieving

The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people enjoy their education and recreation and achieve well is good.

46. Parents and carers of young children receive comprehensive, impartial information about the range of childcare and nursery provision and the financial benefits available to them. Early education and childcare is of good quality and children are prepared well for school. Planning between local authority services, Sure Start and private and voluntary providers is increasingly effective. In Littlehampton, for example, multi-agency teams work with young families to develop parenting skills and promote the well-being of parents. At the same time, babies and young children benefit from improved early learning activities. This multi-agency approach also provides an opportunity for children with learning difficulties or disabilities to be identified and appropriate support provided at an early stage. The council publishes information for parents about special educational needs on its website, but this is not easy to find.

47. Parents and carers receive clear guidance on the admissions arrangements for different types of schools across the authority. There are sufficient school places and a high proportion of parents are successful in getting their child into the school of their choice. However, current arrangements do not always secure quickly enough a place in a local school for looked after children.

48. A survey undertaken for this review, together with the outcomes of school inspections indicate that children and young people have positive attitudes to learning and enjoy school. Attendance in primary schools is high. It is not as high in secondary schools especially in some schools in Crawley and along the coastal strip but it is satisfactory overall. The local authority is robust in pursuing non attendance, and attendance rates in general have improved. The proportion of looked after children who are absent from school for more than 25 days in a year is in line with the national average but increasing.

49. The authority, in its self-assessment, and children and young people in the survey referred to above, recognise the need for schools to deal more effectively with low level, disruptive behaviour. There is a good range of initiatives from relevant support services to promote improved behaviour. Good specialist advice is available for pupils, families and schools. In Littlehampton voluntary agencies, the youth service and local authority services provide a range of activities for disaffected young people and those at risk of exclusion or offending. The approach has contributed to a reduction in the number of permanent exclusions.

50. Schools have good arrangements for supporting the majority of children and young people in developing personally and academically. The Connexions and youth services contribute effectively to the personal development of young people and provide access to additional accredited courses. Local services are alert to the needs of young carers. Good arrangements have been introduced to support this group but as yet, only a small number of young carers are involved. In its self-assessment, the authority recognises that one of the biggest challenges it faces is the long standing high number of children and young people with complex needs who are educated out of the county. This is costly and takes them away from their families and communities. The authority is demonstrating its commitment to inclusive provision and investing heavily in many innovative developments designed to increase its capacity to meet the needs of children and young people with a broad range of special educational needs.

51. The quality of education in the vast majority of schools is good or very good. The school improvement service provides effective support and encouragement to schools to evaluate their provision and identify areas for further improvement. Schools are also encouraged to develop networks to promote collaborative working and share good practice. Currently, only one secondary school is in special measures and one primary school has serious weaknesses. The service effectively intervenes where a school's provision is not of an acceptable standard and schools recover more quickly than in other areas. Standards of achievement are better than those found nationally up to the age of 14 but by the age of 16 they are in line. Furthermore, GCSE results have remained static for the last five years. This review corroborates the authority's self-assessment that its school improvement strategy needs refocusing with a particular emphasis on improving progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4.

52. Educational provision in pupil referral units is of good quality but the amount of provision for many children and young people who have been excluded from school does not meet minimum requirements, with a third being offered less than 13 hours of alternative tuition. There is insufficient urgency to improve this situation. The authority does not yet have a full, accurate and easily accessible database of excluded pupils to support efficient monitoring of placement, provision, attendance and attainment or to enable it to evaluate the impact of its policy and provision.

53. Educational support for looked after children is inadequate. Evidence from case tracking indicates that small numbers of looked after children have to wait too long to find a school place or are unable to attend the school nearest to their care placement. Furthermore, only 70% of looked after children have personal education plans. The provision of additional educational support is being reorganised in order to target it more effectively. However, evidence from foster carers, social workers residential staff and schools indicates that,

currently, the extent of this support is extremely limited and there is a lack of clarity about how to access it.

54. There is a good range of voluntary learning and recreational provision overall. A high proportion of schools provide good or very good enrichment activities. Additional recreational activities are organised for vulnerable groups. The youth service provides a very good range of provision for 13-19 year olds, some specifically targeted at vulnerable groups such as young parents. The authority seeks to involve children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities in mainstream activities. Some parents, however, find transport difficult.

55. Although local services consult children and young people well, there is conflicting evidence as to whether their views are acted upon. The young people of Littlehampton demonstrate a good understanding of their own and their communities' needs. They continue to be concerned that access to leisure activities in the evening is limited by location. Despite their representation through the council to local transport providers, there are no concessionary fares for over-16s to allow those living beyond Littlehampton to have equal access to leisure activities.

Making a positive contribution

The overall contribution of services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good.

56. The area offers good provision for helping children and young people to develop socially and emotionally. The 'Healthy Schools' programme, for example, supports pupils' development in taking personal responsibility and in wider relationships. Peer support training and mediation schemes are actively helping small numbers of children and young people to develop positive relationship with adults and children. Parents and carers are also supported. Foster parents are actively involved with the child's education and foster respite care is available but limited.

57. Children and young people are helped to manage change and challenges in their lives through a good range of activities. For example, children with caring responsibilities offer mentoring to other children in similar circumstances and to foster carers' own children. In addition, there are events such as the mock United Nations general assembly run by young people for post-16 students and junior citizenship conferences. The youth cabinet, in collaboration with Gatwick airport, organised a conference on measures to combat terrorism. A county-wide network of information and advice shops, an information bus and personal advisers from the Connexions service help young people face particular challenges such as transition to work or college, young parenthood and difficulties with drugs and alcohol. Young people are members of the shadow local management committee for Connexions and play an active part in

staff recruitment, improving the quality of advice shops and the Connexions website. These examples represent good initiatives to involve young people.

58. The extent to which children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision-making is good. All secondary schools and many primary schools have school councils that influence school policies about, for example, community safety, healthy eating and improving behaviour. Young people have made presentations to locally elected members and MPs on such issues as local transport, childhood obesity, disabled access, sex education, bullying and discrimination. Minutes of Cabinet meetings demonstrate how such issues have influenced decision-making and policy. The youth cabinet has organised local conferences on improving the effectiveness of school and youth centre councils and its members have had direct involvement in the appointment of senior officers and in housing developments. Further, the strategy for 14-19 education has a key principle that young people are consulted on key decisions. In the Chichester area, for example, young people had recently been effectively consulted on the range and extent of curricular organisation and opportunities between schools and further education colleges. The participation of looked after children is at an early stage but further developments are planned. A small number were consulted about the development of the independent reviewing service and involved in interviewing staff.

59. Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities receive good support when they move between schools. However, their transition within the social care system is less smooth particularly as they move from child to adult services. They are not involved sufficiently in planning for this change.

60. Schools and other educational settings provide a range of opportunities for children and young people to play an active part in their communities. Young people, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, are involved in voluntary activities and support for the community and environment, for example, as millennium volunteers and through the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Transport difficulties prevent some young people from the more rural areas from being as involved in these activities as those in urban areas.

61. Action is being taken to reduce anti-social behaviour. Each district council has a community crime and disorder reduction strategy that is coherent with the overarching county council strategy. The priorities for the next three years are based on a wide and thorough audit and analysis of data. Targets, however, have yet to be determined and much remains at the level of intention, rather than pragmatic action, to reduce the number of young people being the victims or perpetrators of crime. The council and its partners have begun to use resources received from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Peer Support Fund to address the community safety needs of looked after children.

62. The youth offending team (YOT) is based in Littlehampton and partnerships with professional and voluntary services in preventive work are well established. Young people who have offended are provided with a range

of suitable activities such as reparations, corrective attitudes, and anti-drug and alcohol work to assist them in leading law abiding and constructive lives and to raise their self-esteem. For example, those interviewed in Littlehampton viewed the reparations work as fair and as making a contribution to the improvement and the aesthetic appearance of the local area.

63. A wide range of activities enable children and young people to make a positive contribution to the local area. These are closely monitored and provide good local intelligence. However, they lack strategic co-ordination and evaluation of impact to ensure future developments address the most pressing needs of children and young people.

Achieving economic well-being

The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good.

64. A strong Early Years and Childcare Partnership exists between the maintained, voluntary and private sectors and this ensures that there are enough childcare places to meet the needs of parents. The childcare plan prioritises the allocation of places to young parents and is leading to the establishment of neighbourhood nurseries in the most disadvantaged wards of the county where they are most needed.

65. Young people are helped to prepare for working life well. Good work related learning, work experience and careers education are provided in all secondary and special schools in Key Stage 4. The Connexions service provides impartial advice and guidance to all young people and to most vulnerable groups. This is lowering the numbers of young people not in education, employment or training and currently these are below the national averages. Appropriate, but challenging, targets have been set for improving learners' personal and academic development. Care leavers are well supported and at age 19, a greater proportion is engaged in education, employment or training than nationally. Personal, financial and welfare support is provided in all educational institutions with 16-19 year olds.

66. Effective action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education and training is planned in a co-ordinated way. A productive partnership between West Sussex County Council, the Learning and Skills Council Sussex and Connexions exists. The strategy for 14-19 education and training is aspirational and sets out clear principles, objectives and aims. Good arrangements for communication and consultation have resulted in widespread support for the strategy and the partnership has gained the trust and confidence of schools, colleges and other stakeholders. The contribution of each partner is defined well. The commitment to continuous improvement pervades all those who have a vested interest in 14-19 education and training. There is a clear determination to widen participation further and enhance collaboration in order to improve

attainment. The strategic partnership displays good capacity for further improvement.

67. West Sussex is sub-divided into three areas, each responsible for determining a local interpretation of the 14-19 strategy which responds to the configuration of schools, colleges and work-based learning providers and to geographical and economic conditions in the area. The area that includes Midhurst, Chichester and Bognor Regis is more advanced than the other two, partly as a result of its status as a 'test bed' for the national initiative, 'Success for All'. A strategic area review has been completed and organisational changes made amongst Further Education Colleges. Provision in this area is planned collaboratively with common timetabling arrangements, an increased range of courses, satellite vocational centres and 'travel to learn' initiatives well established. The coastal strip and northern areas have yet to set out their respective local interpretations of the strategy. Nevertheless, improved collaborative activity across the area as a whole has increased opportunities for all learners and contributed to greater participation and improved retention rates.

68. The auditing of curricular provision across the areas and the analysis of data relating to attainment and retention rates is comprehensive. Overall, procedures for monitoring, intervention and categorisation of effectiveness are secure and rooted in self-evaluation by the institution. Arrangements for professional development and the dissemination of effective practice are good.

69. Community regeneration initiatives include action to address the needs of children, young people and their families. Strategic partnerships in each of the seven district councils have conducted a local needs analysis and common themes informing the West Sussex community strategy. Priorities are linked appropriately to the outcomes identified in Every Child Matters. Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets have been set to reduce the geographical variation in educational performance but with variable success. There is also clear recognition of issues related to low paid and part-time work and the lack of career opportunities in the Crawley and Gatwick areas and the coastal strip. There are many locally based projects funded by the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) including those to improve basic skills for adults. External evaluations show that those in Littlehampton and the broader coastal strip are well developed and soundly delivered. Less evident, however, is the extent to which children and young people are involved in the identification of need, planning and management in these areas.

70. Overall, there are limited supplies of affordable, adequate housing in West Sussex. The authority in its self-assessment recognises the impact that this has on all children and young people and in particular the most vulnerable. Currently, the authority is not meeting its target of housing all young people coming out of secure accommodation and housing provision for care leavers is poor. There is a lack of clarity about respective roles and responsibilities and a strategy for young people's housing is in draft only.

Service management

71. **The management of services for most children and young people in West Sussex is good.** Effective partnerships are developing, such as the Children's Trust, which are well led and co-ordinated by the county council and for which it has been awarded Beacon status. The Trust is a key element of the wider transformation of council services for children. Partners are positive about and committed to joint working with the county council and have a shared vision of what services should provide. The Children's Trust Board and its strategic development group are effective forums but do not yet have representatives from the district councils, the voluntary sector or local businesses. Operational links and the sharing of information between partners are developing but are not yet consistently effective.

72. The shared priorities drafted by the Children's Trust form a good basis for the development of the West Sussex children and young people's plan. A lead partner is identified for each priority. The draft county strategy for 2005-9, has an explicit focus on promoting social inclusion and early intervention for children, young people and their families. These priorities are reflected well in business and team plans.

73. West Sussex gives high priority to its children and young people. An ambitious vision is shared by all partners and expressed clearly in key strategies and plans. The understanding of local needs by members, staff and partners is good. A shared intelligence service with health has effectively brought together information needed to identify health inequalities. A comprehensive analysis of needs and provision across the county is currently being finalised to provide the basis for planning the joint commissioning and delivery of children's services.

74. The area has adequate capacity to deliver services. Political leadership is strong and senior staff in the council and other agencies are capable and committed. The council began integrating its services for children well before the Children's Trust was established last year. It set up the cross directorate families and school support service to begin the process of delivering integrated preventative and support services. It has established innovative joint access teams (JATs) in several areas to ensure the more effective exchange of information between agencies and earlier more joined-up responses to referrals. The council is committed to implementing these across the county by the end of 2005 and as it does so it is taking account of the lessons being learned and making amendments where necessary. Many JATs are now working effectively to identify and meet the needs of children and young people. There is firm evidence that JATs have prevented some exclusions and that several young people have gone on to gain qualifications and progress into further training or employment. There is less evidence of their effectiveness in securing early intervention. Furthermore, there are no quality assurance procedures to make sure that the right decisions are being made.

75. There is a planned one year transition to a joint children's services directorate with staff identifying their contribution to the five outcomes for children and young people in their 2005/6 business plans. The council has learned from previous initiatives and appointed project leaders to lead the programme of change so that service managers can maintain the delivery of services. There is particularly effective partnership working in the early years sector and in the development of the 14-19 strategy. However there are gaps in some jointly-delivered services such as the housing of vulnerable young people and services for child and adolescent mental health.

76. Both the council and its health partners operate in a very tight funding environment. A lack of resources has slowed the development of child and adolescent mental health services. The number of vacancies for social workers, some of them longstanding, reduces the amount and consistency of support for some children and young people. Planned reductions in council staffing have not been risk assessed and their sustainability is uncertain. The council has insufficient knowledge about its minority ethnic communities to inform planning and service delivery especially in social services.

77. In line with its priorities, the council funds both education and social care above its formula spending share. Overall financial control is strong and there is a well-embedded process of annual budget planning which requires council services to identify efficiency savings and bid for additional funding linked to priorities. Resources are reallocated to follow priorities. £2.5m additional funding was put into schools' budgets in 2005/6 to support special educational needs and additional spending in SCS has been funded from savings on the waste management contract. However there are overspends in key demand led budgets such as that for looked after children. Until this year, separate budget negotiations between senior members and directors reinforced a narrow directorate focus but the council is now beginning to make budget-planning a more corporate process. However historical budgets have not yet been fundamentally challenged to align them with the council's priorities in the medium-term and to underpin cross-service working.

78. Commissioning within the social and caring services directorate is developing in response to pressure on budgets. Staff have a high level of awareness of value for money. They benchmark the costs of services, both purchased and provided in-house, and have used their purchasing power, either alone or with other councils, to manage the external market and negotiate lower charges. There are as yet few jointly-funded initiatives to provide services for children and young people.

79. The value for money of day to day council services is good. Delivery against the five outcomes for children and young people is generally good. Costs are in line with those of similar authorities and there is a keen awareness of the need to spend within budget. However, the council does not focus sufficiently on improving value for money in the medium term. Sometimes the strong focus on controlling short-term costs is to the detriment of delivery. An

example of this is the under-resourced development of IT systems for financial and human resources.

80. Performance management is good. The self-assessment identifies where performance is strong and where it is weaker. The council has effective systems for the regular monitoring of performance both at political and managerial level. Any under-performance on a limited number of key performance indicators is clearly signalled. Appropriate arrangements are in place to oversee joint work such as delivery of PSA with partners taking the lead in some areas. The council's select committees, including the cross-service health select committee, have provided useful evidence to inform changes in policies related, for example, to schools in the community and childhood obesity. However the performance of front line services has been adversely affected by weaknesses in other council services, such as human resources, and the unsatisfactory implementation of new IT systems, which have not been picked up and resolved quickly enough. Monitoring has not led to effective action to reduce the level of vacancies for social workers.

GRADES

Grades awarded:

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

	Local services overall	Council services
Being healthy	3	
Staying safe	2	
Enjoying and achieving	3	
Making a positive contribution	3	
Achieving economic well-being	3	
Service management	3	
Capacity to improve	3	3
Children's services		3
The education service		3
The social care services for children		2
The health service for children		3

RECOMMENDATIONS

For immediate action

81. Improve medical support for looked after children and young people in secure homes by ensuring they have access to on-call GP services.

For action over the next six months

82. Improve the quality of services provided to children and young people, and in particular to those who are most vulnerable by reducing the number of vacancies for qualified social workers; implementing quality assurance procedures for casework, a consistent format for case files and regular auditing of those files; and improving staffing levels and case loads within the leaving care team.

82. Ensure the Children's Trust reviews budgets for children's services across the area and ensure that they are:

- based on clear analyses of anticipated need in the medium-term;
- focused on the delivery of shared priorities; and
- pooled with budgets of partners where this will improve service delivery

84. Improve access to affordable housing for young people and ensure it for those who are vulnerable by moving swiftly to agree and implement a strategy, paying particular attention to the needs of care leavers and those leaving secure accommodation.

85. Improve the provision of child and adolescent mental health services by:

- ensuring front line staff such as GPs, health visitors and school nurses have sufficient resources to manage effectively all cases of mental health problems;
- agreeing and implementing assessment and treatment protocols;
- ensuring that information is readily available to parents, carers and young people in easily accessible formats and places; and
- extending access to therapeutic services to looked after children in short term placements.

86. Improve access for children and young people to speech and language therapy services by reducing waiting times and agreeing consistent criteria for access to services.

87. Improve the effectiveness of the joint access teams (JATs) and increase confidence in their work by ensuring that decisions made by JATs consistently safeguard children by establishing rigorous quality assurance procedures.

88. Improve educational provision for children and young people who have been permanently excluded from school and for those who are looked after by ensuring that:

- a wide range of high quality full-time provision is available for excluded pupils;
- establishing a database to track individual excluded pupils and their achievements and to provide information to enable the monitoring and evaluation of types of provision, including costs;
- ensuring places in local schools are found quickly for looked after children; and
- ensuring that front line staff and foster carers know when and how to access additional educational support for looked after children.

89. Improve provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities by:

- extending access to social care services beyond those who have the most complex needs;
- improving the transition between children's and adult services; and
- increasing the participation of these children and young people, and their parents and carers in decisions about their individual care and about future policy and provision.

90. Improve services for children and young people from ethnic minorities by:

- putting in place arrangements for monitoring the ethnicity of those using services and for auditing and evaluating the outcomes; and
- ensuring staff have the training and experience required to recognise and meet the specific needs of children and young people from ethnic minorities.

For action in the longer term

91. Improve opportunities for children and young people to make a positive contribution to the local area by putting in place an overarching strategy for consultation with children and young people, including arrangements to co-ordinate activities, evaluate findings and feedback outcomes.

92. Improve provision for those children and young people with the most complex needs by ensuring that more children and young people with the most complex needs can live at home.

ANNEX 1: FIELDWORK

Key judgements selected for fieldwork

KEY JUDGEMENTS	FOCUS FOR FIELDWORK
Being Healthy	
Children and young people’s mental health is supported.	Enquiries focused in particular on how far services contribute to a co-ordinated approach to supporting mental health needs, with a particular focus on the provision and effectiveness of CAMHS and identifying how far preventive services are successful in reducing the need for targeted mental health services. Evidence was also gathered from case tracking and discussion with service managers and front-line staff, such as social workers and school counsellors. The review team similarly met and talked to users of CAMHS services and their families.
Staying Safe	
Steps are taken to minimise the incidence of child abuse and neglect.	Evidence was gathered from case tracking; looking at the work of duty and referral teams; and discussion with front-line social workers, schools, the police and service managers. The review team considered the extent to which a wide range of preventive services are available.
Child protection arrangements meet the requirements of <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i>.	Evidence was gathered from case tracking and through discussion with children and young people, front line staff and service managers about the clarity and consistency with which procedures are followed, staff are trained, and referral assessment, planning and review arrangements are applied. The review team also assessed the working arrangements of the ACPC.
Enjoying and Achieving	
Action is taken to ensure that settings provide good quality education.	Evidence was gathered on how schools are monitored, challenged and supported to improve their provision. Enquiries were linked with those concerning the planning of 14-19 education; educational support for looked after children; and educational support for children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Making a Positive Contribution	
No key judgement was selected for fieldwork.	
Economic well-being	
Action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education is planned in a co-ordinated way.	Evidence was gathered on how providers collaborate to meet the needs of enhance the opportunities available to 14-19 year olds.
Children and young people who are looked after by the local authority	
Looked after children are prepared for leaving care and supported thereafter.	Evidence was gathered through case tracking and discussions with care leavers, carers, front-line staff and service managers about the economic well-being of care leaders including their participation and success in education and training; their accommodation; their involvement in drawing up pathway and transition plans; levels of offending; and the quality of on-going support.
Children and Young People with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities	
Assessment, intervention and review processes identify the help children and young people and their carers need.	Enquiry took place across all services to look at the extent to which assessment, planning and assessment are coordinated, efficient and integrated. It included evidence from case tracking discussions with relevant service managers and discussions with social workers, health professionals, teachers, parents and carers.

ANNEX 2: THE CONTRIBUTION OF COUNCIL SERVICES

1. Support for children, young people and their family is identified as a key priority in both the 2001/05 and the new draft county strategy. The council has been awarded Beacon Council Status for integrated children's services in 2005/6. The West Sussex Children's Trust was launched in 2004, one of 35 national pilot trusts. It has drawn together key partners including the primary care, acute and health and social care trusts, the police, the learning and skills council and Connexions, at both the strategic planning level and as direct providers of services. Progress has been slower in involving district councils and the voluntary sector. The Trust has a draft set of shared priorities to identify the key contributions from individual agencies to the outcomes for children and young people in *Every Child Matters*.

2. Local services in West Sussex have a positive and beneficial overall impact on outcomes for most children and young people in West Sussex. The council and its partners have a clear and ambitious vision to transform, and therefore improve further, services for children and young people. The foundations for putting this vision into practice are securely in place and further developments are on track.

3. Services are well managed and, on the whole, resources are adequate although financial planning has a short term focus. The overall capacity for further improvement is good. The council and its partners recognise that outcomes vary related to where children and young people live, their vulnerability to disaffection and the complexity of their special education needs. Educational achievement across all sectors is generally good, above national averages and better than that found in similar areas. It is lower along the coastal strip and in Crawley. However the gap in performance between most children and young people and those who are looked after is greater than elsewhere, provision for children excluded from school is inadequate and too many children with low incidence special needs are educated outside the county at high cost.

4. The council and its partners have contributed to securing good health outcomes for the majority of children and young people in West Sussex. Health education and provision are generally good but too many children and young people with mental health problems wait for too long for the help they need. This has been recognised and is being tackled by the services involved. Childcare provision is available to all who require it and is of good quality.

5. On the basis of the evidence gathered during the Joint Area Review children and young people appear safe. Arrangements made by the council are generally adequate. The proportion on the child protection register is average. The most vulnerable children and young people are safeguarded well from abuse and exploitation. The council is working with its partners to address the relatively high levels of offending by looked after children. Long standing shortages of qualified social workers reduce the amount of support for some

children and young people and the continuity and consistency of that support. Furthermore, they inhibit further improvements in social and caring services.

6. Most children and young people in West Sussex feel that it is easy to have a say in the way things are run at their school. Consultation with children and young people is wide ranging but not yet sufficiently well co-ordinated. Looked after children and those with learning difficulties and disabilities are not always involved sufficiently in decisions about their futures. The number of young people who are offenders is low and they are more likely to be in full-time education, training or employment than in other areas. Rates of re-offending are slightly higher than those found nationally.

7. Most young people are able to achieve economic well being and they are prepared well for working life. More young people are in education, employment or training than elsewhere in the country but for some, particularly in Crawley and along the coastal strip, this means low paid employment. The limited supply of affordable, adequate housing in West Sussex has an impact on all children and young people but in particular the most vulnerable. Housing provision for care leavers and those leaving secure accommodation is uneven across the district councils in West Sussex.

ANNEX 3

Inspection report

West Sussex Youth Service

Introduction

1. West Sussex youth service operates a range of projects and provision across the county including over 100 youth centres and clubs, six information shops, five detached youth work projects, two outdoor activity centres, and a campsite. It has eight management staff, 56 full-time and 533 part-time workers which equates to a full-time equivalent (fte) of 144 youth workers. In addition, there is a Connexions funded team of 26 personal advisors and three team leaders. The service is located with the inclusion and learning support division of the local education authority (LEA). The budget made available by the local authority in 2004-2005 was £4.7 million. It is estimated that 28% of young people aged 13-19 are reached annually by the service.

2. The joint area review (JAR) was enhanced to enable coverage of the youth service. Inspectors considered the youth service's self-assessment and met with officers and a cross section of staff. They reviewed key service documentation and carried out direct observation of a small sample of youth work sessions in Littlehampton as part of the JAR neighbourhood study area as well as other observations of practice within each district.

Part A: Summary of the report

Main findings

Effectiveness and value for money

3. The service delivers above minimum requirements for users and provides very good value for money. It is effective and forward looking. Young people's achievement is good and staff are experienced, competent and most have access to good resources. A diverse range of provision reflects a good level of investment on the part of the local authority and productive partnership arrangements. The local authority provides good strategic leadership and service managers have a thorough grasp of the services strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths

- Youth work which young people find enjoyable and educative
- well planned sessions
- a broad range of provision
- effective and expanding work with priority groups
- productive partnership working
- effective safeguarding procedures.

Areas for development

- **insufficient attention to equality and diversity within the content of youth work programmes**
- **data collection systems do not meet the needs of the service**
- **insufficient opportunities for young people to become involved in youth service management decisions at county level.**

Key aspect inspection grades

Key aspect	Grade	
1	Standards of young people's achievement	3
	Quality of youth work practice	3
2	Quality of curriculum and resources	4
3	Strategic and operational leadership and management	3

The table above shows overall grades about provision. Inspectors make judgements based on the following scale:

Grade 4: A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users: Grade 3: A service that consistently

delivers above minimum requirements for users: Grade 2: A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users:

Grade 1: A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users.

Part B: The youth service's contribution to Every Child Matters outcomes.

4. The service makes a good contribution to outcomes in a number of areas. Appropriate steps are taken to ensure the safety of the young people in its charge. Many programmes enable young people to consider their options and the consequences of risky behaviour. Young people receive initial confidential information and advice and those with more complex needs are supported effectively in accessing specialist health and welfare services. Opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities are increasing but not yet widespread. Youth work helps young people achieve their potential through programmes and activities which are accessible, fun and challenging. Some

focus specifically on personal, social and political development whilst others aim more directly at supporting attainment at school or preparedness for further education, training or work. There are good opportunities for young people to contribute to decision making in the wider community. Managers are well informed and ensure that the youth service is well placed to contribute to future developments.

Part C: Commentary on the key aspects

Key Aspect 1: Standards of young people's achievements and the quality of youth work practice

5. From the small sample of work observed, the standard of young people's achievement was good. Arts and sports were well used to improve young people's creative, practical and physical skills. Use of animated film making at the Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) groups helped participants develop their skills in listening, negotiation, team working and trust. In a minority of circumstances the use of accreditation is underdeveloped.

6. Through their engagement in youth work young people gain confidence and self respect, actively supporting each other to achieve. At a group for young people with learning disabilities members sought positive solutions to practical problems through discussion. They considered problems for wheelchair users on the rail network and how to overcome these. Young people using a climbing wall encouraged each other to make progress and to make the final ascent, gaining peer respect and for one young woman a major sense of achievement and pride. Relationships between young people and workers are consistently good and based on sound professional boundaries. Young people use Information and Connexions Shops to seek information and make their own judgements about how to proceed on particular issues. They are receptive to advice from personal advisers and increasingly confident in seeking support and guidance.

7. Youth work practice is generally of a high standard. In the best sessions youth workers had a thorough grasp of their subject area, were well prepared and had planned activities to meet the needs of young people. Workers used art, for example, to very good effect, with bold ideas allowing young people to express themselves on issues such as school and bullying. In contrast, where work was less good, youth workers struggled to apply the curriculum, their repertoire of approaches insufficient to respond adequately to young people's needs. In part, better practice was viewed where less experienced workers staff had been effectively coached and supported by more experienced colleagues.

8. Overall the workforce is thoughtful, competent and professional. Strong leadership skills blend support with challenge. Workers are sensitive in dealing with more difficult young people both as individuals and in groups. One such instance was with a mixed ability group where the worker demonstrated his knowledge of the group, understanding their relative strengths. He carefully ensured the inclusion of all in the project, skilfully engineering the input of each young person to ensure they could produce a piece of the animated film within their capabilities yet to the standard demanded by the whole group. Some of the work, however, for young people with learning disabilities was insufficiently challenging to enable them to make significant progress.

Key Aspect 2: Quality of curriculum and resources

9. The service has a good spread of youth activities which encompasses clubs, awards schemes, outdoor education, mobile rural provision and information shops. Projects are in place to meet the needs of priority groups including young people at risk of exclusion from school, young parents and asylum seekers. The range and variety of youth provision has increased in the recent past as a result of well managed relationships with, for example, District Councils and the voluntary sector. Externally funded work has had a significant impact, particularly in Crawley. Mid-Sussex and Worthing, however, are generally less well served. Work undertaken by the service in partnership with Connexions has enhanced the curriculum and improved the youth service's ability to respond to the range of young people's needs. A cadre of Connexions personal advisers, linked with the youth service provide support and guidance to, for instance, young people with mental health difficulties. The overall approach adopted is increasingly holistic and improves the referral systems between agencies.

10. Youth workers adhere well to curriculum guidance and generally plan work which young people find enjoyable and educative and which is based on good local needs assessment. Guidance, however, does not reflect the expanding range of work undertaken nor the evolving expectations upon it in relation to Children's and Young Peoples Services. Insufficient attention is given to equality and diversity within the content of youth work programmes and staff are not always deployed to maximum effect.

11. Staff are well qualified and experienced and have access to good training opportunities. Professional development is used effectively to help bring about change and improvement. The service dedicates a relatively high proportion of its budget to this area including the trainee scheme which enables part time staff to work towards a professional qualification. Resources are good and help support the curriculum well. The building stock is variable but even in older premises staff and young people benefit from an attractive physical environment with eye-catching posters and other media. Centres are well equipped with good access to well maintained equipment. A review of buildings has been carried out to meet Special Educational Needs and Disability Act

(SENDA) requirements with the majority providing access for people with limited mobility.

Key Aspect 3: Leadership and management

12. The youth service enjoys good strategic support from the local authority and contributes fully to the overall priorities of the council. Its relatively recent transfer to the 'Inclusion and Learning Support' service enables managers to plan alongside relevant officers from within the education department. Expenditure on youth work by the local authority is in the upper quartile nationally and managers ensure that resources are effectively and efficiently deployed. An additional 27% is attracted to the budget through external funding although some areas do not benefit from it. The youth service reaches about 28% of the 13-19 age range annually. Policies and procedures are in place for child protection and health and safety. Outdoor education centres are subject to external inspection and regulation. All staff are checked by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) but delays in processing the results can lead to frustration locally with prospective workers unable to commence work. Support to voluntary organisations enables them access to CRB checks also.

13. Managers are effective and have a thorough grasp of the service's strengths and weaknesses which are accurately presented in the youth service self-assessment. A business manager post is sharpening financial and service planning. Neighbourhood team leaders manage workers well and provide generally responsive locally based support and expertise. Quality assurance systems are understood and well used by staff. However, data collection is heavily reliant on manual systems and more needs to be done to ensure their consistency. Information shops records do not provide a sufficient level of detail to enable a thorough analysis of users.

14. A variety of youth forums exist around the county, at district council level and the young people's cabinet. The youth service has supported these developments well, principally by training young people, allied organisations and council departments. However, the youth service does not have a well defined role in supporting youth representation within the local authority. Young people are able to influence provision locally but there are insufficient opportunities for them to become involved in management decisions at county level.

15. Partnership working is excellent and well managed strategically. Shared use of buildings, joint capital projects and staff secondments enable the service to respond creatively to the needs of young people. In addition, agreements with local councils, links to Connexions, school-based programmes and, more recently, specialist health organisations have increased the responsiveness of the service. These developments have spawned a host of projects, some locally derived and short term, others longer standing. For the purposes of performance management, however, there is a need for managers to differentiate more clearly between joint projects to which the service makes a

minor contribution and those for which it is more highly accountable. Work with schools has evolved well and is effective but the respective roles and responsibilities of youth workers and schools are not sufficiently clear. Inspectors concur with the service self-assessment which notes that the monitoring of work with external partners should be reviewed.