

Joint area review

South Tyneside Children's Services Council 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 South Tyneside judged the council's children's services as good and its capacity to improve as outstanding.
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.

Context

3. South Tyneside is part of the Tyne and Wear conurbation. Created in 1974 as part of local government reorganisation, it is a small and compact borough covering 64 square kilometres with six areas: South Shields, Jarrow, Hebburn, Whitburn, Boldon and Cleadon.
4. Like many communities whose economies were based largely on heavy industry, South Tyneside suffered significant industrial decline in the 1970s and 1980s with severe social and economic consequences. By December 2001 it had the highest unemployment rate in England and Wales. It is currently ranked eighth.
5. Significant regeneration over recent years has seen an improvement in the socio-economic context of the region, with new businesses and housing developments springing up, particularly along the main transport routes. Despite this, deprivation remains extensive. Six out of 10 residents live in neighbourhoods ranked in the 25% most deprived in England and a significant minority live in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods nationally. Despite a fall in recent years, unemployment, at 4.2%, is still higher than the average of 3.7% for the North East. Almost a third of the children in the borough live in families that receive income-related benefits such as the Job Seeker's Allowance.
6. The majority of South Tyneside's population is White British. At the time of the 2001 census, 2.8% of the total population, and 3.9% of those under 18, were from Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, mainly Indian and Bangladeshi. Since then the proportion has increased and currently comprises 4.4% of the total population.
7. Overall, the borough's population fell from 156,847 in 1993 to 151,300 in 2001. However, the 2006 projections show that the total population is set to increase by 3,500 by 2031. In the case of children and young people, however,

the decline is set to continue. Currently, approximately 25% of the population are under 19 years of age.

8. Pre-school education is provided through 12 children's centres; 10 private sector nurseries; approximately 170 child minders; four stand-alone maintained nursery schools and a further 28 nursery classes attached to primary schools. Three special schools also take children of nursery age.

9. There are 50 primary schools and nine secondary schools in the borough. There are six special schools, and 'the PLACE', an educational support service providing targeted education support and positive activities for looked after children and young people. Eight schools have enhanced resource bases for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There is one pupil referral unit, the Alternative Education Centre.

10. Post-16 education is provided through South Tyneside College in South Shields and the sixth form of St Joseph's school in Hebburn. Work-based training is provided through four main providers as well as a network of employers ranging from large companies to self-employed tradespersons who take on apprentices.

11. Entry to Employment provision is coordinated by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), although the contract holder is 'BSkill'. This company has commissioned work-based training through three main providers: the council, South Tyneside College, and 'Springboard', a voluntary sector company.

12. Family Learning and Family Language, Literacy, and Numeracy training is also funded by the LSC and commissioned through the council's own Adult and Community Learning service. Job Centre Plus provision is delivered by a network of 19 providers, some of whom have been commissioned by the LSC.

13. Primary health care is provided by South Tyneside Primary Care Trust (PCT). Acute hospital services are provided by the South Tyneside Foundation Hospital Trust and mental health services by the Northumberland and Tyne and Wear NHS Trust.

14. Children's social care services are provided through the council's Children and Young People's Directorate, and strategic direction is set by the South Tyneside Children and Young People's Alliance (the statutory children's trust and children's theme group of the Local Strategic Partnership).

15. The council runs two children's homes and has 251 looked after children in its care. Of these, 62 are living outside the local borough boundary. Five young people are in out-of-borough residential placements for behavioural reasons and eight because they have disabilities that require highly specialised support.

16. There are no young offender institutions in the borough. Services to children and young people who are at risk of offending or have offended are provided through South Tyneside's Youth Offending Service.

Main findings

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

- Adequate safeguarding arrangements are in place across the council and partner agencies in South Tyneside. The majority of children report that they feel safe at home, at school and in their local area. Preventative services work well together in supporting families. However, management oversight has not been consistently good enough in some front-line services. For example, the quality of recording in some social work case files is variable and a number of supervision records lack rigour.
- The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people is good. The number of children entering the care system is reducing because of strong services and effective partnerships. The work of adoption and care leavers' services is excellent, as are multi-agency actions to ensure good health care arrangements for all looked after children are in place. The majority of looked after children make at least satisfactory progress in their learning and a higher than average proportion continue in education beyond the statutory school leaving age or enter employment or training.
- Close collaboration between high quality local services, families and schools ensures that the outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. The council has been slow to implement the principles of inclusion but is now tackling the issue with renewed vigour.
- Service management across the South Tyneside Children and Young People's Alliance is good. Strong partnership working, effective use of local intelligence, clear plans and good performance management are making a positive difference to the majority of children and young people. The capacity to improve further is also good because of clear leadership, the impact of partnership work and a good track record of continued improvement in outcomes for children and young people.

Grades

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

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

Recommendations

For immediate action

The local partnership should:

- ensure that an appropriate way is found for the successful dissemination of the findings of this report to children and young people in the area.

For action over the next six months

The local partnership should:

- improve the quality of recording of initial, core and risk assessments
- improve the quality of personal education plans for looked after children
- ensure the Alliance and corporate parenting committee receive regular reports on the impact of actions taken to reduce the offending behaviour of looked after children
- improve the quality of information held on personnel files to ensure that they all reflect current good practice
- increase the pace of implementing the workforce reform plan in order to ensure that staff at all levels in schools have knowledge, skills and understanding to support further inclusion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

For action in the longer term

The local partnership should:

- reduce the number of children subject to a child protection plan
- increase the proportion of children leaving care achieving five GCSEs or equivalent at grades A* to C
- find suitable alternatives to the occasional use of bed and breakfast accommodation for some vulnerable families and young people
- ensure all managers provide a consistent oversight and focus on value-for-money
- ensure the scrutiny committee carries out its role fully in holding services to account for the actions taken to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Equality and diversity

18. Strategic plans focus appropriately on equality and diversity, and the council and its partners are working effectively to ensure that operational processes take good account of the differing needs of local communities. The council has achieved Level 3 in the equalities standard requirements of the Commission for Racial Equality and is working towards Level 4. Equality Impact Assessments have been completed for all policies and procedures across the Alliance. These include race, ability and gender issues, and actions to tackle such inequalities are effectively embedded in service delivery. BME groups are regularly consulted and involved in service planning. The council also works well to facilitate and improve access to mainstream health and social care services for local people for whom English is not their first language, through their Ethnic Minority Traveller and Refugee Achievement (EMTRAS) service which provides outreach interpretation and translation through regular local clinics.

Safeguarding

Inadequate



Adequate



Good



Outstanding



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good reduction in the number of teenage pregnancies over the last three years.</p> <p>The safe environment provided for the majority of children and young people.</p> <p>Good and effective out-of-hours duty service.</p> <p>Very good support to families who are subject to domestic violence.</p> <p>Well-targeted multi-agency interventions to support children and young people at risk of offending.</p> <p>Strong preventative partnership working and collaboration.</p>	<p>Variability in the quality of recording of initial, core and risk assessments.</p> <p>High numbers of children and young people subject to a child protection plan.</p> <p>Variability in the quality of information held on personnel files.</p>

20. The council and its partners have ensured adequate safeguarding arrangements are in place for children and young people in South Tyneside. All agencies have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Since the 2007 APA, the council has taken successful action to improve the timeliness of initial assessments and ensured that lessons learned from serious case reviews have been embedded in current practice. For example, effective pre-birth protocols are now in place and are being used well by partners. A sustained focus on road safety and safe travel to school has contributed to a 20% reduction, over the last year, in the number of young people killed or seriously injured as a result of road traffic accidents. Dedicated nurses work effectively to ensure children and young people are informed about contraception and sexual health, with the result that the number contracting chlamydia has fallen. Good partnership working, targeted at areas most in need, has resulted in a good and consistent fall in the number of teenage pregnancies over the last three years.

21. A comprehensive and well-used child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS), provides 24-hour access for those in need.¹ School nurses, the youth service and the Matrix service provide effective advice and good support to young people on the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse.

¹ CAMHS delivers services to a national 4-tier framework. Most children and young people experiencing mental health problems will be seen at tier 1. This level of service is provided by practitioners who are not mental health specialists such as GPs, health visitors, school nurses and teachers. At tier 2, practitioners tend to be CAMHS specialists such as primary care workers, psychologists and counsellors. At tier 3 practitioners are specialised workers such as community health workers, child psychologists or psychiatry outpatient services for more severe and complex and persistent disorders. Tier 4 services are provided for young people with the most serious problems through, for example, highly specialised outpatient and inpatient units.

22. Strong preventative partnership working and collaboration ensure that the council works well with its partners to take early action and provide good support to children and families when needed. The family support service provides good flexible short-term intervention to families and helps to avoid family breakdowns. Children's centres work across localities and offer parenting programmes and a range of other services, supporting children within their home situation.

23. Good and well-targeted multi-agency programmes such as the South Tyneside Early Prevention Panel (STEPP) ensures children at risk of anti-social behaviour or risk of offending are provided with appropriate support and activities to divert them from such behaviour. The youth inclusion project and junior youth inclusion project programme also provide intensive local support for young people who are in danger of entering the criminal justice system. The family intervention project works very successfully with families at risk of eviction due to the anti-social behaviour of their children. The project works intensively with families and relocates them on successful completion of the programme.

24. Children and young people are provided with a safe environment in children's homes, foster homes, schools, and nurseries. Outcomes from Ofsted's regulatory inspections indicate that judgements in relation to safeguarding are good in the majority of cases. Outcomes from Ofsted inspections also show that all schools inspected meet current statutory safeguarding requirements.

25. Effective anti-bullying policies and procedures are fully embedded into the Healthy Schools programme. Children and young people interviewed during the review reported that they felt safe in their schools and communities. Whilst they say some bullying takes place, incidents are followed up promptly once they have been reported. A pilot programme of restorative justice is helping children and young people understand the impact of bullying on others. Young people were positive about the 'Penn resilience' programme that has been adopted in a number of schools, saying that it has built their confidence and helped them to develop strategies to cope with difficult situations.

26. A well-coordinated multi-agency approach supports families and children who are affected by domestic violence. This includes the South Tyneside Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programme (STDAPP) who work with perpetrators of domestic abuse to increase the safety of women and children. The Options Unit provides a good service to women affected by domestic violence, with an average of 30 referrals to the service per month. Users of the service speak highly of the support they receive, although a small number expressed concern about the occasional use of bed and breakfast accommodation, particularly when the women's refuge is full. Bed and breakfast accommodation is also used occasionally for some young people who have committed offences. The council acknowledges this is not satisfactory and is working to reduce the need for such emergency action.

27. The domestic violence forum, which links directly to the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), maintains well-recorded statistics, monitors trends closely and redirects services accordingly. Social workers are well informed about domestic violence and make appropriate referrals.

28. Duty, referral and assessment arrangements are appropriately managed. However, the timeliness of core assessments completed within the required 35-day period remains lower than that found nationally and in similar councils. Recording practice is varied, with some recording of initial and core assessments, including risk assessments, lacking focus. The youth offending inspection found a similar variation in the quality of case files inspectors reviewed. New recording protocols have been developed but these are not yet being used consistently by all staff.

29. Auditing of social work case files and management oversight of decisions is undertaken, although the recording of these activities, including the outcomes of supervision sessions between managers and social workers, is not sufficiently systematic. Independent reviewing officers provide effective challenge to social workers with regard to the quality and appropriateness of assessments and case planning. Their recording of practice is of a very good standard with a clear focus on planning, timescales and outcomes.

30. All children subject to a child protection plan have a qualified social worker and all child protection conferences and reviews are held on time. Despite these good actions, the number of children subject to a child protection plan continued to increase, and by March 2008 numbers were significantly higher than that found in comparable councils and the national average. However, more recent local data show rates are now reducing because of the decisive action taken since March to improve the situation. For example, the LSCB has responded by revising and improving the children in need criteria and thresholds. In addition, the common assessment framework is now being used more effectively and resulting in an increasing number of appropriate multi-agency referrals per month. Such actions are improving the timeliness, appropriateness and effectiveness of response.

31. A good out-of-hours duty service is provided across the borough by experienced and well-qualified staff who work effectively with other emergency services. Their work is highly regarded by other professionals and families.

32. The LSCB has appropriate representation across partner agencies. The Board has recently been restructured to provide better leadership across the wider safeguarding agenda. Lessons learned from serious case reviews are widely circulated amongst partners and lead to prompt action being taken. All settings and services for children and young people have a designated trained member of staff for safeguarding. The LSCB provides an extensive and well-attended training programme across partner agencies, including an e-learning programme, although, as yet, there is no systematic monitoring of the impact of this good training.

33. Multi-agency public protection arrangements are securely in place. Good monitoring is undertaken of high risk individuals in the community with effective multi-agency action when necessary.

34. Overall, there is an adequate response to the vetting and checks for adults working with children and all enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are in place. However, the quality of information held on personnel files is variable because there is a lack of strategic oversight of the management of these files.

35. Adequate arrangements are in place for those children who are missing from home or school. Protocols have recently been integrated for children missing from education and from home. The numbers of children concerned are monitored by the Children and Young People's Directorate and agencies work together to ensure their safe return.

Looked after children and young people



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Very good health provision for looked after children.</p> <p>High number of looked after children placed by the adoption service in permanent homes.</p> <p>Good quality of care offered in fostering and children's homes.</p> <p>Good leaving care service which is rated highly by those who use it.</p> <p>Highly effective system for reviewing children's plans and involving children's participation in the process.</p> <p>Good systems to track the educational progress of looked after children.</p> <p>Good support for asylum seekers.</p>	<p>The proportion of care leavers achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C is too low.</p> <p>Variable quality of personal education plans.</p> <p>Lack of strategic oversight of the impact of actions taken to reduce the offending rates of looked after children.</p>

Good access and take-up of leisure and cultural activities through the MAX card.	
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37. Good support from the council and its partners, including effective interventions by family support services and multi-agency initiatives. For example, the positive parenting programmes and family conferences, has resulted in a steady decrease in the number of children and young people coming into the care system.

38. Good inter-agency working, including close collaboration between health professionals and schools, ensures that the physical, emotional and mental health needs of looked after children are well met. Services are coordinated well, with effective electronic exchange of information. A good and higher than average proportion of looked after children undertake annual health assessments. Looked after children interviewed during the review found the dedicated doctor and nurse very approachable and they and their carers rated the work of the dedicated clinical psychologist highly. The health needs of children placed outside the council are monitored well by a community matron who visits and evaluates the services in place.

39. A particular strength is the attention given to seeking the views of children and young people who are placed outside the borough and ensuring that they contribute effectively to their reviews. These contributions are captured well on View Point, a computerised child-friendly form which is completed individually with an engagement officer. This information is then used to review current support and inform future action.

40. The wider views of looked after children are heard through the Children in Care Council which meets regularly with elected members and senior officers. Young people feel their opinions are valued and lead to changes. For example, extensive consultation with looked after children and young people led to improvements in the way that medical assessments are conducted. The council is aware of the need to develop the Children in Care Council's constitution so that it can be more representative of the views of all looked after children. The national youth advisory service is contracted to provide an advocacy service. Young people report that it represents their views effectively and that they receive good support when making complaints through the involvement team.

41. Action to assure the continuity and stability of placements for looked after children is an area of strength and this includes assuring continuity of their school placements. Social worker vacancy rates are low and all looked after children have a named social worker, although, in some cases, children report they have had frequent changes of social worker.

42. The proportion of looked after children in foster care is high. These children are well supported by a good service and carers report very good support from the fostering team whom they say are very accessible and

knowledgeable. The Sahara project provides good support and training to carers about young people from diverse backgrounds. However, the council has recognised the need to widen the range of placements available to continue to meet the diverse needs of children and young people.

43. Recent Ofsted regulatory inspections showed that the two residential homes in the borough provide consistently good support, a view corroborated by young people interviewed during this review. The council acted decisively to close a third home that was not adequately meeting the needs of the children in its care. An inter-agency panel successfully monitors all placements, including educational placements within the independent and private sectors, to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of children and provide value-for-money.

44. The adoption service is managed well and, in its most recent inspection was judged to be providing good or outstanding services. The relatively high financial investment in the service ensures the number of children in care who are adopted is higher than the averages nationally and for similar authorities.

45. The educational achievement of looked after children is satisfactory overall, with some strengths. In 2007, the percentage of looked after children achieving the expected level in their end of Key Stage 2 tests represented a continuing rise from previous years. Results were higher than for similar children nationally. They were lower than the national average for all children, but the gap between the two sets of results is narrowing effectively. The council's good individual pupil tracking system indicates that, when their starting points are taken into account, most are making similar progress to their peers across all key stages. This system is used effectively as the basis for school improvement partners to challenge individual schools about actions they are taking to improve outcomes for their looked after children. At 80%, the proportion of young people leaving care with at least one GCSE is better than the national average of 57%. However, as nationally, the proportion obtaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C has been variable over time and, while improving, remains too low.

46. The Project for Looked After Children's Education (PLACE) provides a good range of additional support, tailored to individuals' needs. Designated teachers for looked after children and headteachers welcome the support provided. Staff in the PLACE have ensured all looked after children have a personal education plan (PEP). They are now working to improve the quality of those plans, which is often variable and, in some cases, poor.

47. Decisive action has ensured that no looked after child has been permanently excluded from school over the last two years. However, the number of fixed-term exclusions has risen. The council has altered its procedures to ensure greater challenge and support to schools to tackle this. Effective recent action has also been taken to reduce the previously high proportion of looked after children absent from school for 25 days or more. This includes early action from the dedicated senior education welfare officer,

support from the PLACE and the looked after children's nurse, and clearer guidance to schools. Most recent local monitoring information shows that absence rates have fallen and are now similar to the national average.

48. Strong multi-agency action by the 14–19 partnership, including work-based learners and the voluntary sector, continues to improve opportunities for children leaving care to enter the world of education, employment or training. The proportion is higher than that found in similar authorities and nationally. Connexions personal advisers provide good individual support to young people to help them overcome the barriers they face. For the past three years, all care leavers have had completed individual pathway plans and have been actively involved in developing them. They report that they are motivated by the well-thought out financial incentives to engage them in education, employment or training. Unaccompanied asylum seekers speak highly of the extensive and sensitive help they receive.

49. The good leaving care service is highly valued by young people moving towards independence. Young people report excellent support from the leaving care team but a small number said they were disappointed that this is only available during office hours rather than on a 24-hour basis. A dedicated residential unit prepares them well for their move into a good range of accommodation which has been developed with the local housing service, the voluntary sector and supported lodgings. Good support to foster carers ensures they can continue to provide help for young people after they reach the age of 18 if it is considered appropriate. They and the young people involved welcome this. The leaving care team work closely with the housing agency to widen tenancy choices. Host families are recruited to provide a family for young people needing a more informal approach. Effective support for those with more complex needs is provided through a contractual arrangement with a voluntary organisation.

50. The council and its partners have been successful in ensuring that looked after children take part in a wide range of leisure and cultural activities. High numbers are now using the 'MAX' card, which provides free access to facilities for them and their carers.

51. The APA in 2007 recommended that the council should reduce the number of looked after children who offend. The council has identified this as a key priority within their recently updated Children and Young People's Plan. Whilst there has recently been a satisfactory reduction in the rate, this information is not reported routinely to the Alliance and the corporate parenting committee. Consequently, they are not able to evaluate the impact of actions effectively.

52. Corporate parenting is effective. One of the council's 10 overarching priorities is to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and young people, particularly those in care. With the exception of looked after young people who offend, progress against targets for looked after children are regularly reviewed to ensure services continue to improve, meet young people's needs and help

prepare them to lead successful lives. This is reflected, for example, in the sustained improvement in the number of children and young people who contribute to their reviews. At 95%, the proportion remains well above the average for similar councils.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Inadequate

Adequate

Good

Outstanding

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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>High quality inter-agency work to support children and young people at each stage of their development.</p> <p>Good support and advice to parents and carers.</p> <p>Outstanding provision by services for the visually and hearing impaired, educational psychology service and pupil services team.</p> <p>Good support and challenge offered to schools to improve outcomes for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.</p> <p>High quality advice and support provided by the Connexions service in supporting transition from Key Stage 3 onwards.</p> <p>The excellent range of specialised and integrated cultural activities for young people.</p> <p>Good opportunities for young people to contribute to decisions about important events in their lives and to influence the development of services.</p>	<p>Delays in gaining access to speech and language therapy.</p> <p>Higher than average proportion of pupils educated in special schools.</p> <p>Slowness in implementing the principles of inclusion and in ensuring that provision is cost-effective.</p>

54. Very strong partnerships ensure that services work well together to identify and assess the needs of children young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and to provide them and their families with a coherent and appropriate range of support. The integrated disabilities team ensures that good use is made of information and resources to meet the needs of children who need early intervention. The close collaboration between the community nursing service, clinical psychologists, consultant psychiatrist, educational psychologists and children's centres makes a major contribution in this area. As a result, the number of children under five whose additional needs are being met successfully in early years setting is increasing.

55. Parents and carers are closely involved in making decisions about their children and they have good access to support and advice from the parent support partnership, as well as from the professionals with whom they liaise. The recent appointment of a children's commissioner is designed to extend the availability of advice and to provide further opportunities for parents to influence the development of services. A good range of short break and respite services is available to support families.

56. The health needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well met. There is good and timely access, where necessary, to appropriate CAMHS. Limited resources have led to considerable delays in gaining access to speech and language therapy. However, the quality of provision is outstanding and, once they have secured support, children make rapid and impressive progress. An increase in outreach work and training has led to a reduction in waiting times and enabled more children to receive speech and language therapy within mainstream schools, particularly at primary level. Similarly, excellent support from the relevant services is enabling more children with hearing or visual impairments to be educated in mainstream schools within their local communities, rather than being placed in provision outside of the borough. These are welcome developments which reflect a changing approach to the education of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities within South Tyneside.

57. South Tyneside has been slow to implement the principles of inclusion, with the result that the proportion of pupils educated in special schools is considerably higher than elsewhere in the country. However, it has recently begun to tackle this issue through the introduction of an inclusion strategy and proposals for reorganising and reducing the number of special schools. The impact of these developments is starting to be reflected in a reduction in the number of new statements of special educational need issued; in closer liaison and sharing of resources between mainstream and special schools; and in the increasing number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities being educated in mainstream schools in their own neighbourhoods. The number of children educated outside the borough has fallen from 36 in 2004 to 25 in the academic year 2007/08. The statements of special educational need that are issued are timely, of good quality and reviewed regularly and rigorously, to ensure that children receive the most appropriate provision that meets their

needs. A major element in the further implementation of the inclusion strategy is workforce reform which is intended to ensure that staff at all levels in every school have the knowledge, skills and understanding to deal with the full range of abilities. Hitherto, progress on this has been slow and based on localised arrangements between schools, rather than on a council-wide plan. There is further work also to be done on ensuring that the proposed re-organisation will result in more cost-effective provision.

58. Ofsted section 5 school inspection reports and the council's own data show that the progress made by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good overall. The quality of provision for these pupils is generally good and in several specialist units it is outstanding. To a considerable extent, this reflects the impact of the good quality support and challenge that the council's services provide for its schools. School improvement partners are increasingly entering into rigorous debates with schools over the progress made by children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the targets set for them. The council is providing good support by introducing a common system of assessment which will allow for greater coherence and consistency across institutions. The proportion of children with statements of special educational need in mainstream schools who have been subject to fixed period exclusions varies from year-to-year and is currently above the national average. However, the proportion temporarily excluded from special schools is much smaller than that found nationally and, in recent years, no pupil has been permanently excluded from these schools.

59. An excellent range of leisure and cultural activities is available for these children and young people, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, climbing activities for wheelchair users and library-based projects for the visually impaired. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good use of these activities, several of which give them the opportunity to work alongside their peers from mainstream schools. Activities made available through the Special Needs Integrated Play Scheme (SNIPS) and the 'MAX card' allow for participation by whole families.

60. Children and young people have good opportunities to contribute to decisions about important events in their lives and to influence the development of services. For example, all children with statements of special educational need contribute to their annual reviews, often receiving specialist help through a very dedicated team of local council officers, who know them well, track their progress diligently and act on their views. Feedback provided through the 'Check it Out' project and the 'Talking, Meeting, Eating' consultative group has led to improvements, including better accessibility to public venues and modifications to the 'Special Friends' scheme. Recently, mechanisms have been further enhanced to feed views from the individual consultative groups through the youth parliament to the council's children and young people scrutiny committee.

61. Good inter-agency planning and sharing of information ensure that children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to make a smooth transition through each stage of their childhood and into adulthood. The Connexions service has specially trained staff who work very effectively with young people from Year 9 onwards, providing them with impartial advice on school courses and accompanying them to a range of colleges, outside as well as within the borough, to enable them to identify the courses best suited to their needs and aspirations. This builds very effectively on school provision, such as the high quality vocational opportunities offered by Epinay Business and Enterprise College. The educational psychology service also plays an important role in this area through its contribution to the personal, social and health education of young people and its work on building their emotional resilience. Special educational needs coordinators in schools value the support provided by officers within the council's pupils' service. They speak particularly highly of the work of educational psychologists and their assigned special educational needs officers who support their individual cases in a timely way and help them to secure appropriate help from other agencies when necessary.

62. South Tyneside College works very closely with the 14–19 partnership and the work-based learning sector to provide a good range of vocational options, carefully matched to the needs and aspirations of individuals. It also collaborates with special schools to provide a wider range of opportunities for those with profound and complex needs. The partnership is being increasingly successful in developing routes into employment and higher education for young people on the autistic spectrum. Students interviewed during the inspection were very enthusiastic about the courses they had chosen and confident that they would receive the support necessary for them to build further on their successes. An important result of such inter-agency work is the significant increase, over the last two years, in the proportion of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are in education, employment or training.

Service management

Inadequate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adequate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Outstanding	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Capacity to improve

Inadequate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adequate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Outstanding	<input type="checkbox"/>
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63. The management of services for children and young people is good. Capacity to improve further is good.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>High-profile effective leadership and strong partnership working, including excellent partnership working with the PCT.</p> <p>Focused Children and Young People's Plan jointly owned by partners with agreed priorities following effective consultation with partners and children and young people.</p> <p>Priorities linked to resources and timescales.</p> <p>Impact of prevention services such as reducing teenage conceptions and the numbers of young people seriously injured in road traffic accidents.</p> <p>Strong strategic performance management systems and processes.</p>	<p>Some inconsistent management oversight and focus on value-for-money in a small number of service areas.</p> <p>Insufficient member scrutiny in performance management.</p>

64. The ambition of the council and its partners is good. The vision for South Tyneside begins with children and young people, stating that their young people will have new hope because they will have a bright future. Everyone in the council is committed to this strong vision, from the chief executive and the leader of the council, to the Children and Young People's Directorate, other directorates, councillors and key strategic partners. Senior figures actively engage with, promote and champion children and young people's issues. The vision is underpinned by high expectations as well as a commitment to delivering early preventative community-based services through integrated teams. This represents a strong joint agenda for the borough and provides a common sense of purpose. The challenging ambitions for children and young people are clearly articulated in the Children and Young People's Plan 2008–2011. Ambitions for children and young people are fully embraced within the council's corporate plans and the Local Area Agreement (LAA), which is agreed by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Two of the 11 top priorities for children and young people have been adopted by the LSP as part of the LAA 'must shift' priorities.

65. Partners are strongly committed to the Children and Young People's Alliance, the statutory children's trust, where they are appropriately represented at senior level and make a significant contribution to leading and championing

children and young people's issues. The Alliance has taken ownership of the plan and responsibility for delivering against agreed targets. The plan is built on a good understanding of the needs of local children and young people, drawing on a well-developed joint database 'Intelligence online'. The council hosts this and it is widely available to partner organisations and the public on the internet.

66. The plan also draws extensively on the views of children and young people, including those who are traditionally hard-to-reach, following detailed consultation processes. There are some good examples of involvement in service design and development by young people, for example in relation to improvements made to arrangements for looked after children such as pocket money and personalised space in children's homes, the school meals service and the advice provided on contraception. The youth service has engaged successfully with young people to help develop its provision.

67. Prioritisation is good. The Children and Young People's plan sets clear priorities and actions. These are well based on a common understanding of need. The strategies and service plans to deliver the priorities are mostly in place, but some do not yet identify SMART² targets against which progress can be measured, for example targets to measure the impact of actions to reduce the offending behaviour of looked after children. Good action has been taken to tackle the priority of reducing surplus places and building schools fit for the 21st century. The Building Schools for the Future programme is on track alongside the rationalisation of primary schools through the Transforming Our Primary Schools programme. These programmes and the resource requirements identified within the Children and Young People's Plan link effectively to the council's medium-term financial strategy and capital plan.

68. The Alliance's priority to invest in a range of preventative services is yielding positive results. These include good actions that are reducing the number of children needing to be taken into care, the rate of teenage conceptions and the number of children and young people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents. The implementation of the Healthy Schools programme is well advanced. The council has successfully promoted and extended the use of direct payments for children with disabilities and their families. This has included increasing the proportion of families from minority ethnic backgrounds accessing such payments. While there is good evidence of continued focus on priorities, some key programmes have been slow to develop, such as the inclusion strategy and proposals to reduce the number of special schools in the borough. Others, such as the joint workforce strategy, are in the early stages of implementation and have not yet made a strong impact.

69. Resources have been effectively targeted to priorities for improvement and based on good intelligence. For example, a clear focus on value-for-money and building local capacity in schools through the work of the highly acclaimed visually impaired service has enabled all visually impaired children previously

² SMART targets are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-limited.

educated out of the borough to return to South Tyneside and be educated successfully in local schools.

70. The capacity of children's services is good overall. Partnership working is exemplary and extends the capacity of services to deliver the challenging priorities of the Alliance. The council works effectively with a range of partners including voluntary and community groups, as well as forging strong alliances with other councils and statutory agencies. This is particularly the case for partnership working with the PCT. It is working with services across the local area to improve the physical, mental and emotional health of all young people. Success in this partnership includes action taken to reduce obesity in targeted areas.

71. Decision-making in the Alliance is generally timely, based on good information and well advised by the council's strong risk management approach. Joint commissioning arrangements with identified staff and a clear framework are in place. Strategies for specific services are now being developed within that framework, focusing on improving outcomes rather than on particular delivery arrangements. Some services, such as a community-based well-being clinic, have already been jointly commissioned and resources combined by partners. Funding sources for children's services have been mapped to enable the Alliance to maximise funding opportunities and plan programme exit strategies for short-term projects. The Alliance is developing its joint understanding and measurement of value-for-money across all partners.

72. Whilst many individual services clearly demonstrate a good focus on value-for-money, it is not yet a key driver across all levels of the organisation. For example, the council has reduced reliance on out-of-area placements and worked to reduce the overall use of residential children's care in favour of increased fostering. By contrast, measures to identify the cost-effectiveness of youth service provision are at a very early stage of development. Overall, resources across the Alliance are adequate and well supported by strong partnership collaboration. Financial management by the key players is good.

73. The Alliance demonstrates an appropriate discharge of responsibilities. Councillors and officers are well aware of their responsibilities as corporate parents for children in care. Looked after children are offered a range of opportunities to comment on services and the council ensures they have effective feedback on their comments and actions taken to tackle these. For example, looked after children provided a compelling argument to councillors to improve the level of pocket money and councillors responded positively to that debate by increasing pocket money for all looked after children.

74. The council and its partners are adept at maximising their capacity. They use personnel flexibly and align budgets effectively, rather than pooling them. There are many examples of the flexible use of resources between partners. The scope for joint working at the front line continues to be actively explored. Key partnership arrangements such as the LSCB have been reviewed and

streamlined, although not all are currently effective, for example the Youth Offending Service Board.

75. Senior officers provide good leadership and management at senior officer level. The lead member for children and young people is well informed and understands his responsibilities well. The Executive Director for Children and Young People has a clear vision, provides strong leadership and has achieved a detailed understanding of developments at every level of the service since her appointment. She is quickly gaining the confidence of schools and partners, encouraging challenges to current practice and seeking ways to improve further. For example, she has challenged schools to improve the quality of academic targets within the PEPs for looked after children

76. Performance management is good overall. A clear focus on improving performance has resulted in an improvement in outcomes for universal services as well as targeted services and a narrowing of the gap between children and young people generally and identified vulnerable young people. There is a general sustained trend of improvement. In 2007–08, an above average number of children's service performance indicators was in the top quartile nationally, representing a better than average rate of improvement over the past 12 months. Pupils' attainment has risen across all key stages and there has been an impressive rise in the proportion of 16 year old pupils achieving five GCSE at grades A*-C over the past three years. Very good local actions have ensured a significant reduction in teenage conception rates. At 37.6 %, this is the second best rate of reduction in the country.

77. The Alliance has generally effective systems in place to support performance management. It uses the council's 'PIMS' system as the basis for monitoring progress against the Children and Young People's Plan's targets. This system enables managers at all levels to check progress against agreed targets 'online', with automatic identification of underperformance, and routine reporting to managers. As part of these arrangements, 'performance clinics', run by senior managers and including partner organisations, give managers time and support to look at problems and develop solutions to concerns such as the high absence rates of some young people in secondary schools. The common assessment framework is being developed effectively and enabling more timely and appropriate referrals to services. Despite these good systems, management oversight has not been consistently good enough in some front-line services. For example, the quality of recording in some social work case files is variable and a number of supervision records lack rigour or challenge.

78. The council's scrutiny process supports service development adequately. A dedicated children's services scrutiny committee looks at developments across the partnership as a whole, while information on performance is also overseen by a corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee that acts as the Health Scrutiny Committee. Scrutiny task groups take forward much good development work, for example in considering the roll-out of the inclusion strategy and provision for looked after children. The portfolio holder works closely with

senior managers to monitor performance. However, the children's scrutiny committee is not yet effectively involved in monitoring or challenging service delivery against departmental and corporate priorities.

79. Capacity to improve is good. The council and its partners have most of the necessary building blocks in place. There is an agreed vision supported by a clear strategic planning process that is jointly owned and managed. Clear priorities and actions promote improved outcomes for children and young people. A sustained focus on value-for-money at the strategic level has delivered identifiable savings in excess of the Government's Gershon targets. However, this is not consistently embedded at operational level. The council has continued to develop its management capacity, recently appointing a new service director and strengthening middle management through the appointment of an additional tier of assistant heads of service.

80. Services have continued to improve from a relatively high base. The Alliance has a good track record of improvement against the key performance indicators for children's services. Examples include the good improvement in the proportion of 16 year olds achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE; no schools currently in an Ofsted category of concern; the high proportion of care leavers engaged in education, employment or training; and the improved educational achievement of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Alliance is developing its joint approach to workforce planning across all key partners, including the voluntary and community sector and in collaboration with neighbouring authorities in the sub-region. Effective action has been taken to resolve shortages in social work posts through a 'grow your own' programme, and all school headships are now filled. The council is open to learning from the best and from innovation. It has a proven ability to learn from the outcomes of regulatory inspections, serious case reviews and, with partners, through 'innovation days' in order to improve practice continually.

Annex A

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

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/\(id\)/4733/\(as\)/APA/apa_2008_393.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxcare_providers/la_download/(id)/4733/(as)/APA/apa_2008_393.pdf)

Annex B: Summary of the enhanced youth inspection report

Main findings

1. The quality of youth work provided by South Tyneside is good and the local authority adequately secures its provision. Young people enjoy taking part in activities. They are learning practical skills and developing in confidence and self-belief. Young volunteers are making a good contribution to the projects they are involved in and in some cases to the wider community. Youth workers know their communities well and make good use of strong local networks to enhance opportunities for young people. Many are adept at blending practical instruction with guided discussion to help young people develop greater personal and social awareness. The leadership exercised by some youth workers is inspiring young people to achieve far more than they had thought they could. The authority has invested a good level of resources to support clear ambitions for young people that are well founded on needs and shared with a wide range of partners. There are however, some shortcomings. Some staff lacked the expertise to help young people reflect on what learning could be gained from the activities they were taking part in. The curriculum is failing to adequately respond to the needs and interests of young women. Leadership and management are adequate. Weaknesses in action planning, performance management and evaluation exemplify a service that is not sufficiently analytical or reflective. Improvements in management systems and the development of a more critical and evaluative approach are crucial if the service is to secure continuous improvement and effectively respond to changing requirements and expectations.

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	3
3	Leadership and management	2

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

Strengths

- Young people are developing a good range of skills and are proud of their achievements.
- The quality of practice is good overall with some outstanding.
- The quality of resources is good and there are some excellent specialist facilities.
- The service has established strong and effective partnerships.

Areas for development

- Develop a more effective response to the needs of young women.
- Create appropriate development opportunities to ensure that all staff are equipped to consistently deliver work of a high standard.
- Improve the quality of action planning and mechanisms to monitor and evaluate performance.

Annex C

CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE³

1. Outcomes for children and young people in South Tyneside are good. Action taken by the council and its partners to improve the health and well-being of children and young people are outstanding. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and good work is undertaken to support families and children in times of need. A good and clear focus on school improvement has ensured that the educational attainment and progress of the majority of pupils is at least satisfactory and improving. Children and young people who are looked after or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good services which result in positive outcomes for them.
2. Service management in South Tyneside is good. The council and its partners are delivering improving outcomes for most children and young people. This is achieved through strong partnership working, using effective information and an agreed framework to deliver a common vision that is shared with and owned by partners. Clear plans and strategies and good performance management systems and practices are generally in place to ensure these are delivered. While there are inconsistencies in some areas, such as aspects of the management of the youth offending service, the council is aware of these and has the capacity and commitment to tackle them.
3. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is outstanding. Very good partnership working with the PCT, schools and youth services is making a positive difference to the physical, emotional and mental health of children and young people. Improving the emotional resilience of children is a high priority and many schools access counselling and other programmes to support pupils' emotional well-being. Very good local actions have ensured a significant reduction in teenage conception rates. At 37.6%, this is the second best rate of reduction in the country.
4. The council and its partners have ensured appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place for children and young people. Strong preventative partnership working and collaboration ensures the council takes early action and provides good, timely support to children and families. Children and young people are provided with a safe environment in children's homes, foster homes, schools and nurseries. All children subject to a child protection plan have a qualified social worker and all child protection conferences and reviews are held on time. Despite these good measures, the number of children subject to a child protection plan has, until very recently, continued to rise. There is an adequate response to the vetting and checks for adults working with children.

³ 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.

All enhanced CRB checks are in place, although the quality of information held on personnel files is variable.

5. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and to achieve well is good. The attainment of seven, 11 and 14 year olds continues to improve, and in 2007 attainment was above that of similar areas and in line with that found nationally. There has been an impressive rise in standards attained by 16 year olds from 2005 to 2007. The percentage of pupils achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C improved from well below the national average to slightly above. Local data shows an increasing trend for 2008. Looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve at least satisfactorily and make similar progress to that of their peers when taking account of their starting points. The exception is the proportion of care leavers achieving five good GCSEs which, although improving, remains too low.

6. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society was judged outstanding in the 2007 APA and actions continue to build on the good work in place. There is a strong culture of seeking the views of young people and involving them in decision-making. Their views have informed the work on the Children and Young People's Plan and its recent update. Effective work by the youth service, schools, voluntary sector partners and others helps build opportunities to make a positive contribution. All vulnerable young people, such as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and looked after children, contribute to their reviews effectively and are fully involved in informing service and higher level planning that affects them.

7. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good. Although slow to develop, a good and coherent 14–19 partnership is in place with strong plans for the future. Reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training is a key priority of the council. While still above the national average, there has been a year-on-year reduction and in 2007 the rate was 10.6%, which is similar to comparable council areas. A good focus on young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has ensured the proportion who are not in education, employment or training has reduced well over the past three years. Good actions taken by Connexions and the leaving care team ensure a continuing high proportion of care leavers enter the world of education, employment or training.

8. The capacity of council services to improve is good. This results from good strategic leadership and strong partnership working. Good financial management ensures a sustained focus on value-for-money at the strategic level but there is scope for this to become fully embedded at operational level. The Alliance has a good track record for improving services. It is developing a joint approach to workforce planning across all key partners including the voluntary and community sector, and in collaboration with neighbouring

authorities in the sub-region. The council is open to learning from the best, from innovation and has a proven ability to learn from and implement the recommendations of internal and external review in order to continually improve practice.

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 South Tyneside 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).