

Joint area review

Leicestershire Children's Services Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

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

1. 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.
2. The results of the 2006 APA and other sources of evidence led to the following investigation being carried out:
 - the contribution of services to the enjoyment and achievement of children and young people between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.

Context

3. Leicestershire is an area of distinct contrasts. Eastern Leicestershire is predominantly rural with small villages and market towns, whilst the north and north west is more urban and includes areas around Leicester City. Overall, it is an area of relative affluence and is ranked 136 out of 149 top tier authorities in England in the National Index of Multiple Deprivation (2004). However, small areas of deprivation do exist, notably in north west Leicestershire.

4. Leicestershire has a population of just over 609,000, with approximately 25% aged under 19. The proportion of the whole population from Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups is below the national average (6% compared to 10% nationally). However, the proportion of children and young people from a BME group is close to the national average at 9.1%. The largest of these groups is Asian - Indian who live largely in the Oadby, Thurmaston and Fosse wards. There are 326 looked after children and 2,693 children and young people with statements of special educational needs.

5. Pre-16 education is provided through: 990 childminders, 360 early years providers, three children's centres, one nursery school, 227 primary schools, 54 upper and high schools, six special schools and a pupil referral unit (PRU).

6. Post-16 education and training is provided through: six further education colleges, nine independent sixth form schools, 18 maintained sixth form schools and 26 work-based learning providers. Education to Employment (E2E) provision is managed by Leicester College, involving a local consortium and controlling 300 places.

7. Adult and community learning including family learning is provided by Leicestershire County Council through the Adult Learning Service.

8. Primary care is provided by Leicestershire and Rutland Primary Care Trust which serves the whole of the area. Acute hospital services are provided by the University Hospital Services of Leicestershire NHS Trust. Acute hospital services provided by hospitals in neighbouring authorities include the George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust, for those in the Hinkley area, and the Burton Hospitals NHS Trust for those living in Ashby-de-la-Zouch. Mental health services are provided by the Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust.

9. Children's social care services are provided through: 203 foster carers, 10 children's residential care homes, three family centres and 16 field social work teams.

10. There is one Young Offender Institution in the area, 'Glen Parva' in Wigston. Services to children and young people who are at risk of offending or have offended are provided through the Leicestershire Youth Offending Service.

Main Findings

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

- Arrangements for safeguarding children and young people are good and are ably supported by strong partnership working. Early intervention and preventative working is effective. Children in need of immediate protection receive a very good service. The work of the Local Children Safeguarding Board (LSCB) is outstanding. However, not all children and young people can access services that support their well-being, including Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- Services for looked after children are good. Strong preventative work and decision making keeps looked after children numbers low. Well supported foster carers provide good quality care and are effectively supported by all appropriate agencies. A high number of children live in permanent placements. Attainment is improving but some young people have low school attendance. There is insufficient availability of suitable accommodation for care leavers.
- The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. There is a shared commitment to providing high quality local provision. Early identification and assessment of need is good. Multi-agency working is effective. The criteria for accessing some specialist services are high and not clear to all users. There is inconsistent support for young people with more challenging behaviour.

- The contribution of services to the enjoyment and achievement of children and young people between Key Stages 3 and 4 is good. There is a shared strategy to improve progress between Key Stages 3 and 4 and an effective range of activities that support pupils in their transition from secondary high schools to secondary upper schools. Results for pupils at Key Stage 3 are outstanding and at Key Stage 4 they continue to improve. There is good use of data to support school improvement. The level of unauthorised absence in secondary schools is too high.
- The management of services for children and young people is outstanding. Capacity to improve further is outstanding. There are strong partnerships at both the strategic and operational levels underpinned by strong leadership and management at all levels. The ambition, prioritisation and the capacity of the partnership are excellent.

Grades

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

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

Recommendations

For immediate action

The local partnership should:

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

The Children's Services Department, in partnership with schools should:

- reduce unauthorised absence in secondary schools
- improve the attendance and reduce exclusions of older looked after children.

For action over the next six months

The local partnership should:

- improve support for children and young people with challenging behaviour in mainstream settings
- reduce waiting times for some specialist services, including CAMHS and therapies
- increase opportunities for younger looked after children to contribute to service planning.

For action in the longer term

The local partnership should:

- improve the availability of appropriate accommodation for care leavers
- improve access to services that support children and young people's well-being, including CAMHS.

Equality and diversity

12. A strong commitment to equality and diversity informs the work of the partnership. The council has achieved Level two of the Equalities Standard. There is good inter-agency working to narrow the gap between the majority of Leicestershire's children and young people, and those who are most vulnerable to poor outcomes. The partnership is able to demonstrate considerable impact in this objective particularly for looked after children, children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, children from Traveller communities and for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. There is also good work to tackle bullying, discrimination and hate crime. A range of effective practice across services is playing a vital role in enabling most children and young people to have a voice in the design and delivery of services. Effective action is being undertaken to promote community cohesion in the light of changing demography. Projects are in place to respond to the cultural needs of all children and their families.

13. Most children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are looked after by the council are well supported by agencies that work well together. The significant challenge of providing accessible services to isolated rural communities is being addressed through integrated locality working and the establishment of children's centres in areas of greatest need. The partnership is collecting equality and diversity data to inform plans and ensure that services remain relevant to need and give suitable priority to improving access. For example, district councils are regularly reporting on all outcomes areas including positive contribution and the impact of work to build community cohesion.

Safeguarding



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Children and young people at risk of immediate harm are effectively identified and protected.</p> <p>Outstanding Local Safeguarding Children Board.</p> <p>Good commitment and joint working between agencies to safeguard children and young people.</p> <p>A good range of effective multi-agency early intervention and preventative services.</p>	<p>Access to services that support children and young people's well-being, including CAMHS.</p>

15. Children and young people at risk of significant harm are well protected by very good multi-agency partnership working. In 2006, the APA reported similar findings. Children and young people living in Leicestershire are provided with the safe environment to which they are entitled. There is a good range of preventative work which reduces the risk of family breakdown.

16. A recent survey identified that most children and young people feel safe in school and in their local community. Inspection outcomes for safety and child protection in early years settings and schools are good. Multi-agency initiatives to reduce the number of children under 16 killed, or seriously injured, in road traffic accidents are well targeted and effective overall. A good range of safety information is provided, including on-line protection training for school liaison officers to teach children to use the internet safely.

17. Children and young people have the opportunity to give their views on safeguarding issues at an operational level and these are used to improve practice. Complaints are taken seriously and receive prompt responses through an effective complaints service. A comprehensive anti-bullying policy underpins a good range of initiatives that offer effective support to those at risk of bullying. A missing children protocol and inter-authority arrangements are correctly established and arrangements for tracking children and young people missing from care and education are good.

18. Multi-agency partnerships effectively promote healthy lifestyles for children and young people in need of additional support. Schools offer good support; in July 2007, 58% of Leicestershire's schools achieved the Healthy Schools status which is 8% above the national target. A range of services are in place to support children's emotional well-being, including primary mental health workers within the CAMHS and counselling for children affected by bereavement. However, the partnership recognises the need for further coordination of these and greater access across the county for children and young people. Children and young people are offered early, and good, support to reduce anti-social behaviour and effective action is taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending. Between April 2006 and March 2007 first-time offending reduced by 15% and re-offending by 11.8%, both of which are significantly better than the national picture.

19. Domestic violence is given good attention by all agencies and joint working between the police and social care duty teams is effective. Agencies generally share information well. Most families suffering domestic violence receive good support, however, a few children living in safe accommodation are not able to access support in a timely way.

20. Agencies work well together to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect. There is a good range of early intervention and safeguarding provision, delivered through children's centres, community settings and in the voluntary sector. These include multi-agency parenting groups and the innovative Family STEPs programme. Measured and detailed project planning is in place to roll out multi-agency integrated teams and this will be fully completed by July 2008. The Common Assessment Framework has been effectively implemented in one area and has resulted in a reduction in referrals to children's social care.

21. Arrangements for referral, assessment and support are well managed. Thresholds for social care involvement are well understood and agreed by partner agencies. Communication between the daytime service and the out-of-hours team is good. There is effective management scrutiny of all referrals which are responded to promptly by qualified social workers. Most assessments are of a high standard and are based on a robust analysis of need.

22. The proportion of initial and core assessments completed within timescales is good and is higher than in similar authorities and nationally. The percentage of repeat referrals is lower than in similar authorities. The number of referrals that proceed to initial assessments is significantly lower than in similar authorities. The council has identified that this is due to the way data was collected. Children in need receive timely and effective multi-agency support and this is regularly reviewed. The use of family group conferences successfully implements alternative solutions for children at risk of becoming looked after. The quality of case recording is good; those case files examined showed effective social work practice.

23. Outcomes for children and young people most at risk are good. Child protection arrangements are rigorously managed and the system works very well to protect those children and young people who are at risk of significant harm. Good use is made of comprehensive management information and regular and systematic case file audits have led to discernable improvements in recording. Effective multi-agency preventative work means that numbers of children on the child protection register are significantly lower than in similar authorities. There is a higher proportion than nationally remaining on the register for a longer period and a lower rate of de-registration. Systems for managing child protection are robust; children do not remain unnecessarily on the register and receive good support following de-registration. All children on the child protection register have a qualified social worker and their plans are reviewed on time. The quality of child protection plans is good. Reviews and core group meetings are well managed. Children receive good support to help them understand the reasons that they are in need of protection.

24. Families where English is not their first language are well supported through the use of interpreters. Multi-agency support continues to be effectively provided to those children no longer subject to a child protection plan including appropriate referral to universal services.

25. Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) are well established and contribute effectively to the safeguarding of children and young people from adults who pose a risk to them. The management of allegations against professionals suspected of abusing children and young people is good, and is effectively monitored by the LSCB. Employment practices ensure the safe recruitment of staff working with children and young people. Disciplinary procedures are also robust and well managed.

26. The LSCB is outstanding. It covers the county, Leicester city and Rutland, and operates on a firm foundation of joint working. It is tightly focused on child protection activity and has also successfully extended its brief to include the wider safeguarding agenda. It is well established and well resourced. The independent chair provides very effective and knowledgeable leadership and has identified the need to increase the involvement of children and young people in the work of the board. The lead member provides appropriate challenge and ensures accountability. The LSCB is forward looking, efficient, and meets its targets well. Sub-groups provide valuable challenge and scrutiny and quality assurance is very effective. Joint processes for the development and review of procedures are good and are backed by a very well resourced and far reaching training programme. Together these factors demonstrate the excellent commitment of partners to keeping children and young people safe. The LSCB is linked well to the Children and Young People's Partnership Board and other planning groups and ensures that safeguarding issues are appropriately raised. The number of serious case reviews has been low. These have been dealt with competently and the learning drawn from previous reviews has been effectively incorporated into wider practice.

27. Performance management of staff is good. Arrangements for governance, operational and strategic management are well embedded. Supervision and performance reviews are routinely undertaken. Front line staff are supported very well by highly competent managers. Vacancy levels are low which means that children and young people receive a consistent service.

Looked after children and young people



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>A robust strategy and effective decision making to keep numbers of looked after children low.</p> <p>Strongly developed and effective preventative services.</p> <p>Well developed permanency planning including adoption and within in the wider family.</p> <p>Good quality multi-agency care planning and review.</p> <p>Effective multi agency placement support, including health and education.</p> <p>High quality care from well trained and supported foster carers.</p>	<p>Poor school attendance and high exclusions of older looked after children.</p> <p>Insufficient suitable accommodation for care leavers.</p> <p>Limited opportunities for younger children to contribute to service planning.</p>

31. An effective child care strategy ensures that children only become looked after when this is the best way of promoting and safeguarding their welfare. Thus there are a considerably lower number of looked after children in Leicestershire than in similar councils. Resources are well targeted and there is a very good, comprehensive range of services for children on the edge of care. Intensive support packages, provided through the well qualified Family Support Team, enable children to remain with their families. High numbers of children unable to live with their parents for reasons of protection are very successfully permanently placed in their wider families without remaining looked after; 218 children are currently financially supported through residence orders and 14 through special guardianship. Adoption performance is very good. In 2006/07, 10% of looked after children were adopted in a very timely way which is higher

than nationally. Risk assessment and decision making are robust and well managed. Numbers of children placed out of the area are low and arrangements for contracting and monitoring these placements are very good.

32. Those remaining looked after include a high proportion of teenagers who have a wide range of challenging needs. This is reflected in lower numbers in foster care and the reducing long-term stability. In January 2007, over half of children looked after for longer than two and a half years were teenagers who found it difficult to settle in a placement. The council has taken firm action to tackle this through targeted recruitment and improved rewards for foster carers. In year placement stability is good and in line with similar councils. Agencies, including the voluntary sector, work effectively to provide a range of high quality placement advice and timely support to fragile placements.

33. Looked after children appear to be safe. During the course of this review, 28 looked after children and care leavers aged 8-20 were seen and the vast majority are very pleased with the care and support they receive. Their concerns are effectively responded to. Most are placed within 20 miles of their home and good efforts enable them to remain in contact with their families. Children and young people benefit from regular visits focused on their needs and their placement transitions are effectively managed. Foster carers are well trained and supported and provide high quality care. Most children's homes provided, or commissioned, by the council are judged good by regulatory inspection, although a very small minority are recently judged poor. The council was already aware of these shortcomings and accelerated their action plan to tackle the weaknesses.

34. Multi-agency care planning and information sharing is good. The quality of care plans is also good; they are rigorously monitored and used effectively to improve outcomes. Reviews are very timely and correctly managed. Most (91%) are completed within timescales, which is significantly better than in similar authorities and children and young people's views are valued. The needs of BME children are well considered through the Black Cases Panel. All children in care, including those placed out of the area, have access to advocacy through the county's Children's Rights Service but this not sufficiently available for looked after children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Access to sport and leisure activities for looked after children is provided free by district councils.

35. A small, and effective, team of health specialists has enhanced the quality of health assessments, and these are well audited. Seventy percent of looked after children currently receive annual health checks which remains good, although lower than the national average. Health promotion is systematically planned and is having an impact. For example, all looked after children are now registered with a dentist. Targeted support for looked after young people misusing substances has resulted in more timely assessments; a higher proportion received an intervention in 2006/07 than is found nationally. A specialist CAMHS team provides a good quality service to children and carers

and gives looked after children a high priority, although a small minority experience lengthy waiting times.

36. The 2006 APA identified offending behaviour as an area for improvement. Good multi-agency action has been taken. Communication has improved, protocols have been strengthened, and additional funding has been secured. As a result, offending has reduced from 3.8% to 2.8% and is in line with the national picture. To sustain this improvement the youth offending service is working with children's home staff to develop a restorative approach.

37. Increasing attainment was identified as an area for improvement in the 2006 APA. This is being vigorously tackled and a wide range of support and guidance is available. Although numbers are very small all children in Key Stage 1 achieved Level 2 in reading and mathematics in 2006. The Step UP project is a very good example of successful intervention at Key Stage 2 and has increased numbers achieving Level 4 or above in all three subjects. At Key Stage 2, 57% of 11 year olds who were looked after achieved the expected level in English and 78% in science, an improvement of 22% and 50% respectively from 2005. Numbers obtaining at least five A* to G grades at GCSE have improved from 42.1% in 2004 to 59.3% in 2006, compared to 41.4% of all looked after children nationally. There is an improving picture in the percentage obtaining one A* to G grades and numbers in higher education have almost doubled since 2005. Fluctuations in GCSE results occur due to the very small numbers involved, the increased proportion of teenagers becoming looked after, and the higher than average number of children with statements of special educational needs (36% compared to 27.7% nationally). This is reflected in the variability of attainment at higher levels from year to year. The percentage of young people leaving care with five or more GCSE A* to C grades in 2006, at 9.1%, was slightly above the national average.

38. Regular multi-agency auditing of personal education plans (PEPs) has resulted in improved numbers of looked after children having plans in place. This has also led to improvements in their quality which is good overall. Complex problems are dealt with well through multi-agency PLACES panels and in 2006/07 the county panel improved engagement in education for 83% of those referred. A small number of older young people have persistently low attendance and 35 missed more than 25 days schooling in 2006/07. Exclusions are also high for this group. The council has robustly tackled this at a high level of seniority; resources have been increased and significantly improved monitoring arrangements give looked after children a very high priority. However, this is yet to impact on improving outcomes.

39. Corporate parenting is firmly established and well resourced. The lead member offers very effective direction. Four strategic multi-agency groups have produced demonstrable improvements but they do not fully cover the needs of care leavers. Older looked after children make a good contribution to service planning through the well supported T2C group and this is making a difference for all looked after children. For example, improvements to the quality of information they receive and consultation with care leavers has resulted in

improved health and accommodation provision. However, younger children in care do not make a contribution to service planning.

40. Care leavers benefit from good multi-agency working and information sharing. Risks are managed well. A very large majority of care leavers are allocated to a personal adviser and have a pathway plan, although a minority of these for those aged 18-21 are not regularly reviewed. High numbers are engaged in education, employment and training and many have benefited from individual mentoring since 2005. The new Flying Fish project provides high quality work placements. The range of accommodation options has recently improved but the availability of district council housing is variable. It is unsatisfactory that some care leavers and unaccompanied asylum seeking young people are placed in bed and breakfast provision.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



42. **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>Shared commitment to providing high quality, local provision.</p> <p>Good early identification and assessment.</p> <p>Effective and co-ordinated multi agency working.</p> <p>The contribution of area special schools.</p> <p>Procedures for monitoring and evaluating inclusive provision in mainstream schools.</p> <p>Provision for children with disabilities.</p>	<p>Thresholds and waiting lists for some specialist services, including CAMHS and therapies.</p> <p>Inconsistent support for young people with more challenging behaviour.</p>

43. The 2006 APA identifies a number of strengths within the council in supporting outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The findings of this, more wide-ranging review, endorsed those strengths and found few important weaknesses.

44. A clear vision and shared commitment to promoting local, integrated services impacts positively on provision. More children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are educated in mainstream schools and near to their home than is found nationally. Their progress is often good. Good partnership arrangements, and new ways of working, are extending the capacity of schools, services and multi-agency groups to provide flexible, local provision. The SEN strategy has been consulted on widely. The development of provision is securely rooted within the wider inclusive practice being promoted by the targeted services strategy and school improvement service. Issues identified in the previous LEA inspection have been effectively addressed.

45. When a young child is identified as having a disability, parents receive very good support. They value highly the work of specialist health visitors, the Disabled Children's Team, Early Years SEN support team, Portage and MENPHYS SOS, a voluntary organisation offering home-based support. Early assessment is followed by well co-ordinated action from a range of service providers. Early intervention is particularly effective for children with physical disabilities, complex needs and autism. Families with school age children also continue to receive generally good multi-agency support, including an appropriate range of family-based and residential short breaks schemes. Good action has been taken to increase the availability of respite for those with most complex needs but this remains a challenge for the council and its partners.

46. There are good arrangements in place to safeguard children with disabilities through the multi-disciplinary specialist Disabled Children's Team. There is good multi-agency working between health and social care.

47. A single point of access for health services offers most service users a responsive and helpful service. The quality of specialist health services are good but waiting lists and high threshold criteria for services such as CAMHS and occupational therapy mean that not all children and young people get timely access to them.

48. Ofsted inspection reports illustrate that children make good progress in specialist early years settings. Funding and specialist support is available to include children with disabilities in local mainstream independent nurseries if this is the parents' choice. Careful planning and discussion with mainstream and special schools result in successful moves from nursery to school.

49. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in almost all special schools and in 65% of secondary schools. This is better than is found nationally where the figure is 58%. Pupils in primary schools also make generally good progress. Test results illustrate that many children with learning difficulties make good progress from Key Stages 2 to 3. The proportion of children performing below expected level at Key Stage 2, but who reached the average level by the end of Key Stage 3, is significantly better than the national picture.

50. Overall, schools identify learning difficulties and/or disabilities early and provide well for the assessed needs of individual pupils. They are well supported by services for children and young people with visual and hearing impairments. A particular strength in identifying children needing extra support is the new multi-agency pastoral forums. The approach reflects the good partnership working between all agencies, including health, social care, education, voluntary agencies and the police.

51. The budget for meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs has been fully delegated to schools. Although they find this challenging, schools are responding with innovative, collaborative and local initiatives. Area special schools have a clearly defined role in sharing their expertise with mainstream schools and contribute very positively to local solutions through outreach programmes and advisory work. Initiatives to improve behaviour have had a positive impact on reducing permanent exclusions. Schools commission the Behaviour Support Service to work with young people at risk of exclusion. During 2006/07, 94% of pupils referred to the services as being at risk of exclusion were supported well and able to stay in their own school. There is good provision for those whose challenging behaviour meets the criteria for CAMHS. However, meeting the needs of some children with challenging behaviour, including those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorders, remains a difficulty.

52. Access to leisure and recreational activities is good and remains a key priority for the local authority. District councils have agreed to offer free access to sport and leisure activities for children attending special schools. Increasingly, young people participate in a good range of activities, some are exciting and challenging such as canoeing and kayaking. Voluntary groups and specialist youth workers actively promote participation in both specialist and integrated settings and participation increased by 32% last year.

53. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively involved in their annual reviews and transition planning. They are encouraged to make their views known more widely and contribute effectively to improving service provision, for example in the production of a young person's information booklet on 'Making plans for leaving school'. The Youth Service supports the development of skills so that they are able to contribute effectively at school council meetings and as members of the Youth Forum and the Youth Council.

54. As young people approach school leaving age careful consideration is given to provision for adult life. Over 90% of young people with statements of special educational needs had a transition reviews at 14+, well above the national figure of 63%. Connexions personal advisers work effectively with the young person, school and home.

55. In 2007, 83% of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities continued in education, employment or training. This represents an improvement from the 71% in 2004 and is greater than other 16 year olds in

the county (74%). Those with complex needs usually stay on in special schools until they are 19. Good working relationships and regular meetings between the Disabled Children's Team and the Transition Team enable timely and effective handover of information.

56. A measured approach is successfully building on good multi-agency working and increasing the capacity of services to respond to local need. Occasionally a lack of transparency in the way resources are allocated and the high thresholds to access specialist services such as respite care particularly for older children with complex needs or behavioural problems, and occupational therapy causes frustration among some parents and other services users. Innovative commissioning using direct payments and the Independent Living Fund are providing appropriate provision and support packages in local communities whenever possible. Numbers receiving direct payments are good; 98 families received these during 2006/07.

Other issues identified for further investigation

The enjoyment and achievement of children and young people between Key Stages 3 and 4

57. **The contribution of services to the enjoyment and achievement of children and young people between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is good.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>The successful establishment of a shared strategy to improve progress between Key Stages 3 and 4.</p> <p>Effective activities to support pupils in transition from secondary high schools to secondary upper schools.</p> <p>Further improvement in results for pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4.</p> <p>The good use of data to support school improvement.</p>	<p>The level of unauthorised absence in secondary schools.</p>

58. The children and young people's plan effectively prioritises improvements in attendance and attainment particularly for vulnerable groups, and the implementation of its 13-19 strategy to support improved results at Key Stage 4 and the council, in partnership with schools, has taken effective action. There is an improving trend in attainment at all key stages. Standards are above those of similar authorities and national averages.

59. Outcomes for young people at Key Stage 4 are improving and in 2006 they were above GCSE national averages when English and maths are included. Leicestershire has successfully introduced a new partnership strategy for its schools to improve the educational outcomes for children and young people at Key Stage 4. School improvement partners and the authority's national strategy consultants work well with high schools and upper schools to identify, and share, good practice, and to challenge satisfactory schools to become better. Standards have been significantly raised in targeted under-performing schools.

60. The speedy implementation of a collaborative 13-19 strategy is leading to better curriculum choices. Attendance in secondary schools has improved to an 11 year high and is in line with comparable areas and the national picture, though unauthorised absence, at 1.31%, is higher than that in similar authorities. The authority uses very good data analysis to guide its improvement actions.

61. Leicestershire has been very successful in establishing a positive change in the relationship between its officers, the high schools that cater for 10-14 and 11-14 year olds and the upper schools catering for 14-18 year olds. High schools recognise their shared responsibility in preparing young people well to achieve their potential at 16, and are working closely with upper school partners to improve transition arrangements. School governors are closely involved in the improvement strategy. School improvement partners, working with national strategy consultants and school staff, identify and share good practice and effectively challenge schools to set more aspirational attainment targets.

62. After a late start in implementing the 13-19 strategy, Leicestershire has made rapid progress. Three specialist diplomas are approved to start in 2008. New student apprenticeships are catering for 114 young people. A successful Key Stage 4 engagement programme is helping to re-motivate 160 young people at risk of not achieving their potential. The number who started on increased flexibility programmes rose from 604 in 2006 to 1136 in 2007, although the authority, and its partners, recognise that there is further improvement to be made, for example at foundation and Level 1. More young people are remaining in education after 16 as a result of the effective introduction of a more varied curriculum between ages 14-16. The proportion not in education, employment or training dropped from 11.2% in 2006 to a satisfactory 7.3% by September 2007.

63. The authority is extending its very successful Key Stage 3 strategy to teachers working at Key Stage 4. Effective teachers are being encouraged to become outstanding by experimenting, and sharing, new teaching approaches. Working relationships between the upper schools, high schools and primary schools in school groups or 'families' has improved. School groups are developing a range of innovative solutions to meet local needs. One group, with support and advice from the authority, has commissioned a common virtual learning environment to help improve transition between high schools

and upper schools. Three secondary schools are piloting the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme with support from accredited SEAL primary schools in their group.

64. Teachers at Key Stages 3 and 4 are working together to map the skills pupils have developed or will need. Open evenings, options evenings, taster lessons, a three-day induction programme and advice and support from Connexions, the youth service and learning mentors help young people to make more informed choices of subject. Young people value much of the transition work. However, for those who transfer to a different upper school from most of their peers, or for those re-integrating from the PRU into upper school, the arrangements are less successful.

65. Educational outcomes continue to improve. Provisional Key Stage 3 results in 2007 are outstanding and in 2006 were above similar authorities at Level 5 and Level 6 in English, maths and science. More than 80% of pupils reached at least Level 5 in all three subjects. This makes Leicestershire the fifth best performing authority in the country in English, second in maths and first in science. Attendance in secondary schools is at its highest level for 11 years and is broadly in line with similar authorities. The number of secondary schools with high levels of persistent absence fell from nine to six following successful targeted intervention. Permanent and fixed-term exclusions from secondary schools have declined but unauthorised absences continue to be higher than in similar authorities.

66. The authority analyses, and uses, its data very well to target improvement activities. Four of the schools targeted improved by 10% the number of pupils achieving five or more A*-C grade GCSEs. Unvalidated GCSE results for 2007 have improved. The proportion of young people achieving five or more A*-C grades reached 60% for the first time, with four schools showing dramatic improvements on the 2006 results. The corresponding figure including English and maths also improved from an above average 46% in 2006 to 49% in 2007. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. There is an improving trend in the attainment of children looked for those achieving at least one GCSE pass which is now higher than the national average for all looked after children. However the proportion achieving higher levels of attainment at GCSE is variable.

67. Vulnerable and underachieving groups are well supported to improve their attainment. After five years, in which boys' GCSE results were 10 points below those of girls, just above the national average, the authority reduced this gap by a third. Pupils from Traveller families are well supported through the use of laptops and internet-based distance learning techniques during the summer months whilst they are travelling. As a result of this work, two young people have progressed to higher education, and are being seen as role models in their community. Additional support is good for looked after children and those at risk of not achieving, for example through intensive English and maths lessons. A multi-agency panel works successfully to re-integrate young offenders into school. Basic literacy and numeracy teaching for young offenders is very good.

Although small in number, with just 30 pupils in the cohort, Bangladeshi pupils make up the single largest BME group at Key Stage 4 in 2006. Although fluctuating, achievement of Bangladeshi pupils at GCSE has improved steadily since 2002, though it still remains below the national average for Bangladeshi pupils.

Service Management



Capacity to improve



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Outstanding capacity to make further improvements.</p> <p>Strong partnership at both strategic and operational level based on shared ambitions.</p> <p>Outstanding Local Safeguarding Children Board.</p> <p>Strong leadership and management at all levels and across the partnership.</p> <p>Excellent ambition, prioritisation and capacity.</p> <p>Well embedded performance management which is used effectively to further improve provision.</p>	

69. Ambition for children and young people in Leicestershire is outstanding. The council and its partners have high ambitions for children and young people and aim to be 'the best'. The partnership is characterised by high levels of trust, shared goals and very good collaborative working at all levels. Partners are keenly involved in developing the children's services strategy. There is a strong commitment to maintaining high quality services and taking robust action to improve outcomes. For example, the 2006 APA identified the need to reduce first-time offending and re-offending. Reductions in the area during the following year were significantly better than those achieved nationally.

70. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) provides very good strategic direction for the partnership. The CYPP review in 2007 included a good analysis of need and used a comprehensive range of data and other information, for example from consultation exercises, to set clear targets. It suitably reflects the ambitions for Leicestershire as set out in the community strategy and the council's corporate strategy. The CYPP is underpinned by good quality service action plans which effectively translate the priorities for children and young people into concrete action. Children and young people were actively involved in the review of the CYPP and have been integral in developing the council's ambitions. The partnership takes their views seriously and uses a good range of formal and informal means of gaining them, for example, through district-based youth councils and the county youth council (CYCLe). At the annual 'Vox Pop' event young people meet directly with elected members and senior officers, this event organised by CYCLe has been established for 10 years. Young people in Loughborough were able to raise concerns about a lack of facilities which led directly to a £600,000 project to extend youth work facilities at a local community centre. Young people from vulnerable groups are also effectively involved, for example those children who are looked after have a voice through the T2C group.

71. Prioritisation is outstanding. Partners have very effectively balanced a focus on improving outcomes for children and young people, managing change and developing service provision. The partnership has clear priorities that are well understood. Partners successfully manage the strategic priorities alongside responding to local needs, taking a flexible approach where appropriate and building effectively on existing strengths in service provision.

72. Excellent prioritisation and carefully targeted action has led to significant improvements in many areas. For example, there has been a significant reduction in the number of schools in any of the Ofsted categories of concern from 13 in 2006 to four in 2007. No secondary schools are currently in a category of concern. Resources are used well and are effectively aligned to support priority areas. For example, the increased level of funding invested by the council in schools beyond the schools' grant and the Schools' Forum commitment of £750,000 to support achievement at Key Stage 4. There are high quality preventative strategies that deliver in priority areas, for example ensuring that there are low numbers of children and young people looked after. The partnership has a very good focus on equality and diversity issues and is committed to narrowing the gap between the majority of Leicestershire's

children and young people, and those who are most vulnerable to poor outcomes. For example, the youth service effectively meets the needs of priority groups such as BME young people, young people from Traveller communities, young carers, young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual and refugees and asylum-seeking young people.

73. The capacity of the partnership is outstanding. The commitment of health partners, the police, the voluntary sector and district councils is substantial at both strategic and operational levels. The primary care trust has aligned its resources to complement locality working and a joint appointment is supporting the development of commissioning. The capacity of the voluntary and community sector has been strengthened through a joint funded co-ordinator post located within the sector. There is an outstanding LSCB with very good leadership. Political and officer leadership of the Children's Services Department is very strong and is underpinned by knowledgeable and experienced managers all levels. There is a stable, experienced workforce with low levels of sickness absence. All qualified social work posts are filled. Taken together these ingredients lead to very effective partnership working. For example, in the north west of the county locality working and the implementation of the common assessment framework had led to reduced referrals to social care and reductions in school exclusions.

74. There is strong and effective focus on value for money. External funding is utilised well to strengthen capacity. For example, European Social Fund monies have supported a basic skills project for young offenders to equip them with skills to gain employment. The council has committed a high level of funding to schools beyond the schools' grant. The Schools' Forum has dedicated over a million pounds to deliver priorities such as supporting the educational achievement for looked after children. Capacity has been enhanced through the imaginative use of direct payments to enable parents of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to purchase respite care and leisure provision. The council's capacity to undertake widespread consultation, and take difficult decisions, has been demonstrated through, for example, closing one underperforming school and reorganising secondary education in the Vale of Belvoir and Melton Mowbray. The latter was the result of widespread consultation and engagement with schools, children and young people, parents and the wider community. There is a well conceived commissioning framework and there are good examples of commissioning voluntary sector providers and out-of-area placements for looked after children. However, the framework has not yet been fully implemented. The pooling, and aligning, of budgets is not yet fully developed within the partnership.

75. Performance management of children's services is good. The council and its partners review performance data on a regular basis and take effective action to ensure targets are met. For example, when focusing on school attendance the council was able to target work by identifying schools where non-attendance was particularly high. The council welcomes external evaluation and the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee provides appropriate oversight and challenge. The Children and Young People's Board has a good

performance monitoring framework. Monitoring at service level is systematic and within children's social care there is a well established programme for regular audit of case files which is used to effectively improve practice. User feedback is regularly sought as part of the monitoring process and contributes to service improvement. There is a programme of robust service reviews, for example, the review of targeted services. Contracts are well monitored, for example placements for looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

76. There are well embedded professional development review (PDR) processes for staff within the council and personal targets are effectively linked to service targets and corporate aims. Training opportunities are made available following PDR, many of which are for joint training across the partnership as part of a joint workforce strategy.

77. Partnership working is characterised by high ambitions, mutual trust and a strong commitment to achieving the best outcomes possible for children and young people in Leicestershire. Outcomes are good overall and, in some instances, they are outstanding, for example Key Stage 3 results. The Youth Offending Service has achieved the highest rating from the Youth Justice Board for overall performance and is the second highest performing in the country. Improving outcomes is at the heart of decision making and underpins all aspects of the partnership's work.

78. The capacity of the partnership to improve further is outstanding. The partnership has an impressive record of securing improvements in priority areas, for example improvements in GCSE results at Key Stage 4 which are now above the national average when English and maths are included. Social care services for children and young people have been consistently delivering good quality services. There is very good self awareness within the partnership. Learning is well utilised to shape strategies and service development. Excellent political and managerial leadership have ensured that all partners are fully committed to delivering the strategy for children and young people. A rapid and successful programme of change has taken place. Cultural change has led to the priorities for children and young people now being shared by partners, including schools. Leadership and management are strong at all levels and across partner agencies. There is a robust strategy to ensure Leicestershire's workforce is equipped to deliver the priorities of the shared agenda for children and young people. Only two other county councils spent less per head on services in 2006. Good outcomes are achieved despite comparatively low levels of funding.

Annex A

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

The council consistently delivers services for children and young people at a good level. Children's services are making significant contributions to improving the achievement and well-being of children and young people so that these become better than good. The contribution to children and young people being healthy and to staying safe is good. The council's contribution to young people achieving economic well-being has been strengthened through a well targeted 13–19 strategy and outcomes are good. The contribution to children and young people's enjoying and achieving is good. The council's impact on children and young people making a positive contribution and its capacity to improve are outstanding.

The full annual performance assessment can be found at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=284163&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa_2007_855.pdf

Annex B: Summary of the Enhanced Youth Inspection Report

Main findings

1. The quality of youth work provided by the authority in Leicestershire is good and the service sufficiently secures youth work.
2. Strong partnership working with the voluntary and community sector extends the provision and participation by young people is high. Sound preparatory work has been undertaken that will contribute to the development of integrated youth support services although detailed planning is in the early stages. The service contributes well to the local authority's range of education leisure time activities. Youth work practice and young people's achievements observed during the inspection were good and at times outstanding. The service has in place action plans to ensure consistently high performance across the county. Young people's personal and social development is very good; those taking part in the County Youth Council for Leicestershire (CYCLe) and local youth forums demonstrate an excellent ability to function well politically. Young people help shape the service in a variety of ways and their views are taken seriously. The service is well established as part of the CYPS and participates fully in wider local networks. The aims of the ambitious service are understood and shared by staff who make good use of the well considered curriculum framework to plan their work. They draw well on data and local knowledge in identifying needs and the service targets provision well for priority and vulnerable groups. The range and quality of provision is outstanding. Full-time staff hold appropriate qualifications but around 50% of part-time staff do not. The well planned training programme helps improve youth work practice. Accommodation and resources are good. The attractive "the Jitty" web-site is well used by young people. There are sound policies to ensure that young people and workers have a safe environment and thorough safeguarding procedures are in place. Systematic performance management and rigorous quality assurance lead to improvements in the service. However reporting of the quality of youth work undertaken by voluntary sector partners is not sufficiently evaluative and the monitoring of quality is underdeveloped.

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	Leadership and management	3

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

Strengths

- Standards of young people's achievement and the quality of youth work practice are good and at times outstanding.
- The soundly based curriculum offer includes well planned targeted work that provides effectively for the needs of priority groups.
- The effective contribution made by young people helps shape youth work provision and wider local authority services.
- Well planned staff training and development support workers to improve their practice and make progress in the profession.
- Partnership working with voluntary and community sector partners is well established and extends the provision available for young people.
- Systematic performance monitoring and rigorous quality assurance bring about improvements to the service.

Areas for development

- Ensure part-time staff continue to gain suitable qualifications.
- Improve the monitoring and reporting of the quality of youth work undertaken by voluntary and community sector partners.

Annex C

CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Outcomes for children and young people in Leicestershire are good and in some instances outstanding. This is achieved despite low levels of funding. Key Stage 3 results in 2006 were outstanding and above similar authorities, making Leicestershire one of the top five performing authorities in the country. At Key Stage 4 results are improving and above GCSE national averages when English and maths are included. Unvalidated GCSE results for 2007 have improved further. The proportion of young people achieving five or more A*-C grades reached 60% for the first time. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. There is an improving trend in the attainment of children looked after with achievement of one or more GCSE passes now above the national average. The proportion of young people who achieve a full Level 2 qualification by age 19 has improved for three years consistently, to above average. Overall health outcomes for children and young people are better than similar authorities and national averages. For example, there are higher breast-feeding and immunisation rates and better access to primary care. Teenage pregnancy rates are below the national and regional averages.

2. Service management in Leicestershire is outstanding. It is characterised by high ambitions and a very strong commitment to achieve the best outcomes possible for children and young people. Priorities are effectively identified and underpinned by good needs analysis. Partnerships are very strong at both the strategic and operational levels. The council consistently delivers services for children and young people at a good level. Performance management is effective and the impact of the leadership and management of children's services is demonstrated by the good, and improving, outcomes achieved by Leicestershire's children and young people.

3. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. There is effective promotion of healthy lifestyles. National and local targets in relation to the Healthy Schools Programme have been met. There is a strong commitment to reducing childhood obesity. Annual health assessments and dental checks of looked after children are in line with the national average. Access to mental health services for looked after children, and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is good. However, non-specialist cases do not receive timely access to mental health services.

4. Children and young people appear safe and arrangements to ensure this are good. The Local Children Safeguarding Board (LSCB) is outstanding. It is tightly focused on child protection activity and has also successfully extended its brief to include the wider safeguarding agenda. Partnership working is very effective. Those at risk from abuse are protected very well by good professional practice and multi-agency work. The number of children on the child protection register has fallen as a result of good early intervention and effective

preventative work. Child protection procedures are implemented well and practice is managed and audited effectively. All children on the child protection register have an allocated social worker and almost all reviews are carried out on time. The proportion of children who are looked after continues to reduce as a result of good preventative measures.

5. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and to achieve well is good. Most children and young people report they enjoy school. There is an improving trend in attainment at all key stages and standards are mostly above those of similar authorities and national averages. Carefully targeted, and effective, action has been taken to support school improvement in weaker schools. There has been an impressive reduction in the number of schools in any of the Ofsted categories of concern. No secondary schools are currently in a category of concern.

6. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society and achieve economic well-being is good. Children and young people are actively involved in developing the council's ambitions. Those from vulnerable groups are also effectively involved, for example children who are looked after have a voice through the T2C group. Rapid progress has been made in implementing the 13-19 strategy. More young people are remaining in education after 16 as a result of the effective introduction of a more varied curriculum between ages 14-16. Strong corporate parenting effectively promotes the economic well-being of young people who are looked after by the council.

7. The capacity of council services to improve is outstanding. There is a considerable track record of making improvements in priority areas. There is excellent leadership in Children's Services that has led to a rapid and successful programme of change. Leadership and management are strong at all levels and there is a robust strategy in place to ensure Leicestershire's workforce is well equipped to meet future challenges.

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 Leicestershire 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 focussing 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).