

# Joint area review

**Lancashire Children's Services Authority Area**

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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  
Ofsted

**Age group:** All

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## Introduction

1. The most recent annual performance assessment (APA) for Lancashire judged the council's children's services as good and its capacity to improve as good.
2. This report assesses the contribution of local services in ensuring that children and young people:
  - at risk or requiring safeguarding are effectively cared for
  - who are looked after achieve the best possible outcomes
  - with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve the best possible outcomes.
3. The following investigation was also carried out:
  - the quality of service provided and the outcomes achieved by children and young people using Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

## Context

4. Lancashire County Council is the fourth largest council in England and Wales. There is a population of 1.16 million (mid-year estimates 2006), which is projected to grow by almost 8% to 1.23 million by 2028. The county comprises a mixture of urban, rural and coastal communities and covers 12 district councils: Burnley, Chorley, Fylde, Hyndburn, Lancaster, Pendle, Preston, Ribble Valley, Rossendale, South Ribble, West Lancashire and Wyre. Parts of Lancashire's economy have a low wage and low skill base, especially in the east of the county. Four of the county's districts (Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle and Preston) rank in the top 30 most deprived districts in the country (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007).
5. Five per cent of the population are from minority ethnic backgrounds, predominantly Pakistani and Indian, clustered mainly in parts of the east of the county and in Preston. More recently, small but growing numbers of people from Eastern Europe have begun to settle across the county, with concentrations in Lancaster and Preston.
6. A total of 20% of children across the county are income deprived according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007. Six areas (three in Burnley, two in Preston and one in West Lancashire) are ranked in the 2% most deprived in England for child poverty and 9.5% of children in Lancashire live in Super Output Areas ranked among the 10% worst nationally for income deprivation.

7. Pre-16 education comprises:
  - 61 children's centres (with a further 18 being developed), 304 day nurseries, 192 pre-schools, 346 out-of-school clubs, 23 creches, 78 holiday schemes and 1,141 childminders
  - 25 nursery schools, six infant schools, six junior schools, 472 primary schools, 85 secondary schools, 31 special schools and 14 short stay schools (pupil referral units). Enhanced resource facilities for pupils with special educational needs are located at 14 schools.
8. Post-16 education comprises:
  - 16 secondary schools, 11 colleges of further education, including specialist nautical (Fleetwood) and rural development (Myerscough) institutions and four universities.
9. Adult and community learning are delivered through the county council's Lancashire Adult Learning service. It also provides a wide range of family learning opportunities, in partnership with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).
10. The North West Strategic Health Authority, NHS North West, was created in July 2006. The health needs of people in Lancashire are now served by three Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). Central Lancashire PCT, East Lancashire Teaching PCT and North Lancashire Teaching PCT. This is a change from the previous eight PCTs that provided services. The population has access to a number of acute and district general hospital facilities inside the county boundaries and in adjoining council's.
11. CAMHS are commissioned by the three PCTs. Providers are the East Lancashire Hospitals Trust in East Lancashire, Central Lancashire PCT in Central Lancashire and in the north by two providers: Blackpool PCT for Fylde and Wyre and Lancashire Care Trust for Lancaster and Morecambe.
12. Children and young people's social care services are provided through 650 foster carers, 26 children's homes (including nine care homes for children and young people with disabilities), 10 child and parenting support teams (formerly family resource centres) and 37 social work teams.
13. There is one young offender institution in the area.

## Main findings

14. The main findings of this joint area review are as follows:
  - Safeguarding arrangements are adequate. Although most children and young people appear safe and core child protection arrangements are good, a significant service area designed to protect the most vulnerable children, namely those in foster care, is

inadequate due to a lack of compliance with national minimum standards and weak performance management arrangements.

- Services for looked after children are inadequate. The most recent inspection of the fostering service judged it to be inadequate and the service remains in breach of regulations. Overall, the educational attainment of looked after children is improving but remains well below the overall achievement of other children and young people in Lancashire. This is similar to other councils. The adoption service is effective and well managed. Children's views and concerns are well supported through a good children's rights service.
- Services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. There is an effective emphasis on inclusion which is enabling more children and young people to be educated in their local area. The use of data to raise achievement is excellent. There are gaps in provision in some areas of the county for education and work-based opportunities for this group after the age of 16.
- Provision for children and young people requiring mental health services is adequate. Early intervention through universal services such as schools is good but access to more acute CAMHS and transition arrangements to adult services for specific groups are inconsistent across the county. There is no consistent county-wide approach to the commissioning of CAMHS.
- Service management is good. This judgement takes account of all children's services provided by the council and its partners as well as the evidence gathered for the specific investigations in this joint area review. Education and health outcomes are good but performance management arrangements in the fostering service are insufficiently robust. Partnership working underpins shared ambitions for children and young people articulated in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and reflected in wider corporate plans. However, joint commissioning is in the early stages of development. Staff and resources are in place to deliver priorities and some key services have improved. Capacity to improve further is adequate. The area has the capacity and the leadership to make progress.

## Grades

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

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

## Recommendations

### For immediate action

The local partnership should ensure:

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

The council should ensure:

- placements of all children in foster homes comply with regulations and promote their safety and well-being
- more robust performance management arrangements are in place for those involved in the fostering service
- ensure that councillors' sufficiently monitor the progress made by children and young people who are looked after.

### For action over the next six months

The police and the council should:

- agree and implement a consistent approach to risk assessing domestic abuse cases prior to referring them to duty teams.

The local partnership should:

- improve the educational attainment of looked after children
- improve the numbers of reviews of care plans held within required timescales

- improve the availability of relevant courses, work-based training and employment opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- ensure all service and action plans have precise targets, milestones and named responsible officers and systematically include the needs of all sectors of the community.

The NHS commissioning bodies and the partnership should:

- develop and implement a county-wide approach to the commissioning of CAMHS that ensures the provision of a comprehensive 24-hour CAMHS.

### **For action in the longer term**

- The council and its partners should reduce the numbers of children seriously injured or killed on the roads.

## **Equality and diversity**

15. The partnership has a shared strategic commitment to equality and diversity. This is well reflected in the CYPP, which contains two cross-cutting priorities relating to improving access to services for all children and young people and improving community cohesion between and within communities. However, whilst attention is given to equality and diversity in high-level county-wide priorities, this is not always carried through systematically into all action plans.

16. The partnership works well to promote equality and diversity and community cohesion, and much good work is taking place across the county. Some examples include the 'Building Bridges in Burnley' project, which has successfully brought together young people from various heritages to work on joint activities to break down racial and parochial barriers in their communities. Outcomes to date include increased representation from both groups of young people on the Youth Council, and a successful application for 'Headspace', funding to develop a dedicated space for young people to meet at Haslingden Library. Improved links with faith groups have helped target hard-to-reach families through the use of the local 'Spirit Radio'. There is some support for women from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds fleeing domestic violence. Good use is made of translation and interpretation services.

17. Cultural competency training has been received by all CAMHS staff and is being delivered to staff from universal services throughout 2008 with particular attention being paid to the specific needs of Traveller and transition groups. For children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities there is evidence that parents are involved with their assessment at all stages and that they are treated fairly.

## Safeguarding



18. **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>Partnership working is good with a high commitment from agencies to safeguard children.</p> <p>Well-managed initial assessment and duty arrangements for children in need and child protection cases.</p> <p>Low numbers of children subject to a child protection plan.</p> <p>Well-established and effective Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).</p> <p>Good access to a range of family support services in localities.</p> <p>Good support to women, particularly those from Black and minority ethnic communities fleeing domestic abuse.</p> <p>Good support to children involved in risky behaviour such as substance misuse, and those at risk of being sexually exploited.</p>	<p>Insufficient action has been taken to ensure that foster placements meet national minimum standards</p> <p>Lack of consistency in the grading of domestic abuse incidents referred by the police to duty teams.</p> <p>The high number of children and young people seriously injured or killed on the roads.</p> <p>Variability in the recording of safeguarding checks undertaken when recruiting council staff and the filing of such information.</p>

19. The child protection system is well established with good inter-agency working that is characterised by a sound understanding of how to identify risk and effective communication at an early stage. A good range of early support and preventative packages are available and these ensure that children are well safeguarded. Adoption services are good. Safeguarding arrangements for those being fostered continue to be inadequate following the fostering inspection of 2007 and the recent monitoring visit in April 2008. This issue is dealt with in more detail in the looked after children section of this report.

20. Partnership working is good and agencies have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities in safeguarding children. They share information at an early stage where they have concerns about families and children in need. There is a strong focus on early intervention and prevention of family breakdown, particularly for younger children. Within localities there is good access to a range of effective family support services. There is well-targeted intensive support to children at risk of entering the criminal justice system through services such as Group Intervention Panel (GRIP), which offers group work over a fixed period. However, in some areas, services are patchy for young people aged 14 and over who display more challenging behaviour both in their families and in the community.

21. Parents and children have good access to information, advice and practical support about keeping safe. This includes close cooperation between the fire and rescue service, the voluntary sector and others such as schools and children's centres to work directly with children and young people and parents about issues such as fire safety and the risk of fire raising. Work between the police, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and schools helps to keep children safe. Some attention is also being paid in schools to raising awareness about forced marriages and honour violence. Safe Parenting handbooks have been distributed to over 30,000 families across the county. Children's centres in some areas have started to deliver basic child protection training for parents to help prevent harm.

22. Support to children and young people at risk of substance misuse is good. There has been a substantial rise in the number of young people who access the service since a service review in 2007 and significant reinvestment has taken place. Most young people get a timely response when referred for assessment or treatment.

23. Early years settings provide children with safe care. Most childminders, out-of-school provision and day-care provision were rated satisfactory or good during 2007/08 by Ofsted. However, the fostering inspection in 2007 and the monitoring visit in April 2008 have judged that the service remains inadequate, meaning that some of the most vulnerable looked after children are not always sufficiently well safeguarded. Insufficient action has been taken to ensure that foster placements meet national minimum standards.

24. The council and its partners have a strong focus on tackling bullying. A county-wide strategy group is in place and the LSCB has held an awareness raising conference for multi-agency staff with young people helping to deliver the programme. Within schools there is good access to training, support and advice for children and young people and staff. Policies and procedures are well established and fully reflect the most up-to-date national guidance.

25. The number of children seriously injured or killed has fallen by 30% against the 1994–08 average, but this is at a much lower rate than the England average of 52%. There is good use of incidence mapping information to

develop local action plans to deliver targeted activity in hot spot areas such as the Right Start Practical Pedestrian Training Programme. The council's own monitoring activity indicates that there has been some impact in reducing accidents among primary school children in these areas. The county-wide annual pupil attitude survey indicates that most children and young people feel safe crossing roads on the way to school.

26. The arrangements for responding to children in need referrals and assessing and managing child protection cases are good. Initial and core assessments are completed promptly and performance is better than national averages and similar councils. The council recently moved to a central customer call centre and concerns raised by practitioners from other agencies about the length of time taken to get through on the phone are being addressed. The council has ensured that staff have access to advice from experienced social workers who also quality assure the referrals that are logged.

27. Multi-agency risk assessment meetings contribute well to the identification of families at risk. The present arrangements for the police to refer all incidents of domestic violence to the duty team work well in the main. However, there is a tendency for the teams to be pressurised by the volume of incidents referred. The use of a prioritisation system in some police divisions is helping to contribute to effective risk assessment of the incidents, but this practice is not consistent across all divisions.

28. The work of the voluntary sector in responding to women and children who experience domestic abuse is good. Of particular note is the work of women's refuges in supporting those from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. There is good access to interpreting services and in one refuge visited there is good access to support workers who communicate in the same language and understand cultural and religious sensitivities. Opportunities to work directly with children are limited, and in some areas services are not available or are in development. Work with perpetrators is also limited, with few programmes in place. An inter-agency county-wide domestic violence strategy has recently been developed.

29. Lancashire has fewer children than similar councils who are subject to a child protection plan and a very low proportion of these children have been subject to a plan for more than two years, which is good. Most children are first-time entrants to the child protection system and those who are subject to a plan more than once are also small in number. Most protection plans are of good quality. Parents and carers are supported well to contribute to plans and meetings. All children have an allocated key worker and have their plans reviewed on time. Children and young people's views are well recorded, but the LSCB recognises that more needs to be done to improve young people's contribution to meetings, plans and decisions.

30. For those children whose situation does not meet the criteria for a child protection plan, good use is made of inter-agency meetings to share information about risks to them and to put in place creative packages of support. Progress on implementing the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is now gathering pace following extensive multi-agency training days. Three areas, one in each of the three PCT boundaries, have recently begun to implement the CAF. Alongside this work, good progress is being made in preparation for the introduction of the multi-agency information sharing system.

31. The LSCB is well established; it has a firm financial base and has good representation from across agencies both on the County Board and on locality groups and subgroups. Involvement of the wider voluntary sector is, however, underdeveloped. The Board has no agreed performance management framework. This is currently being addressed through a working group. Practitioners from across agencies, including those from private, voluntary and independent sector and further education colleges, have access to a good range of multi-agency child protection training and up-to-date procedures. The use of e-learning and the LSCB website is effective in improving access to safeguarding information not only for practitioners but also for the public and in particular for parents and carers.

32. Good, well-established systems and processes are in place to manage serious case reviews. Good progress is being made in implementing the arrangements for the Child Death Overview Panel. Effective links have been developed with the faith and community sector to ensure that awareness is raised about child protection and safeguarding matters.

33. Arrangements for the management of allegations against professionals have been strengthened with the recruitment of the Local Authority Designated Officer and designated officers in partner agencies. Multi-agency protection panels are in place and these contribute well to the safeguarding of children and young people from dangerous offenders living in the community.

34. Arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff are well established in the council. There is evidence that Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and other checks are being undertaken, but there is variability about the way these have been evidenced on files. The council is in the process of bringing together a range of administrative systems that had previously been in place prior to the development of the joint children's department, with the aim of achieving better consistency. The LSCB regularly monitors progress on these matters.

35. Well-established systems are in place to track Traveller children, children missing from care, education and home, those educated in health settings and those moving across agency boundaries. Some good and developing arrangements are also in place to support young people who are victims of forced marriage and/or honour violence.

## Looked after children and young people



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>The children's rights service.</p> <p>Good adoption service.</p> <p>Increasing attendance at school.</p> <p>Good support provided to young people leaving care.</p> <p>Good stability of placements.</p>	<p>Non-compliance with fostering regulations.</p> <p>Insufficient understanding and monitoring by councillors of services for looked after children.</p> <p>Low educational attainment of looked after children compared to all children in the county.</p> <p>Low proportion of reviews held within the required timescales.</p> <p>High proportion of looked after young people not in education, employment or training at age 16 and 17.</p> <p>Barriers to participation in school trips.</p> <p>Inconsistent access to CAMHS.</p>

37. The fostering service was judged inadequate by Ofsted in August 2007. In response to this, the council made improving the fostering service a high priority and an action plan was produced to take forward the changes required. A recent monitoring visit in April 2008 acknowledged some progress had been made with the action plan but found the service remained in breach of regulations. For example, there continue to be cases of some children who have been placed with carers who have not been formally approved. There are instances where exemptions to the maximum number of children fostered have not been properly approved or reviewed and this has resulted in overcrowding in some foster carers' homes. The joint area review inspectors found that these weaknesses remain. The council has acknowledged the seriousness of these concerns and has implemented urgent measures to address them.

38. In contrast, the adoption service is well managed. It received a good outcome at its most recent Ofsted inspection. The quality of service provision, combined with the relative low spend on the service, results in it providing good value for money. A good percentage of looked after children are placed for adoption within 12 months of the decision being made.

39. Recent inspections of children's homes judged them to be generally providing good care for young people. There has been a reduction in the numbers of young people placed in residential care over the last seven years. The majority of children are in foster placements and the proportion of young people in residential care is now nearly as low as comparable councils and better than the national average. Young people spoken to consider they are well supported and they appreciate the improvements made to the fabric of the buildings. The ratio of residential staff qualified to NVQ level has been below comparable and national averages but is now reported by the council to have risen from 51% to 77%. The council recognises the need for further investment to develop the range of directly provided residential and fostering services to better meet the varied needs of those looked after. This includes placements for those from the increasingly diverse population.

40. The ratios of children and young people in the county who are looked after is higher than comparable councils, but below the national average. There are improved systems and resources in place to support children and young people to prevent them becoming looked after. This includes the child and parenting support teams who are able to offer intensive support to families. A high number of children and young people are placed with relatives and friends, 17.9% compared to 11.5% in comparable councils and 12.7% nationally, which is considered to be good practice.

41. The APA in 2007 identified the participation of looked after children in their reviews as an area for development. The council reports some improvement in the numbers of children and young people contributing to their reviews from 81% to 88%. The commitment of the reviewing officers to improving the service is evident from the individualised record of the reviews sent to young people to make them more personal. Reviewing officers can determine an award of a £22 voucher to celebrate and reward the successes of children and young people. The number of reviews of looked after children held within required timescales is improving but remains an area of weakness at only 80%. A number of children and young people and their carers are unhappy at the frequent changes of social workers. Stability of placements, however, is very good in the short and long-term.

42. Looked after children with complex needs are well supported by health services. Those spoken to report they have good access to health services coordinated by the designated looked after nurses. The number of children having annual health checks continues to improve above the average for comparable councils.

43. Access to CAMHS for looked after children is inconsistent. Young people in children's homes have good access to services, but foster carers indicate that there are often long waiting lists and high thresholds for accessing services for some young people in their care. To overcome these barriers partners in the East Lancashire Teaching PCT area have collaborated to develop a project designed to provide direct support for foster carers and residential staff. The positive impact of the scheme is evident from the good feedback from practitioners and carers.

44. The roles and responsibilities of corporate parenting are well understood by councillors. The chair of the Children's Services Board offers good support to young people who attend the meetings, ensuring they are able to make a positive contribution. Councillors undertake statutory visits to children's residential homes and attend the yearly looked after children award ceremony. However, there is insufficient monitoring by councillors to ensure that looked after children and young people make good progress and there are too few opportunities for children and young people to meet with councillors.

45. The educational achievement of looked after children is a key priority for the county. Outcomes in this area are adequate. The awareness and expectations of key partners are being raised and strategies are in place to improve outcomes. The focus on joint working and coordination of educational and welfare support is starting to have an impact, especially for younger children, with achievement improving in primary schools. Overall, results are improving but from a very low base. Key Stage 1 results show a significant improvement, from nearly 29% achieving Level 2 in reading and writing in 2006 to nearly 62% in 2007, and from 40% in mathematics in 2006 to nearly 62% in 2007. A similar positive picture emerges at Key Stage 2. In 2007, 41.5% of 11 year olds achieved Level 4 in mathematics (up by 10% from 2006) and 40% in English (up by 4% from 2006). Science results also improved by 10%. Despite these improvements, attainment for looked after children at the end of primary education remains well below Lancashire and national averages for all 11 year olds.

46. More looked after young people are being entered for examinations at age 16. Results for one or more, and five or more, GCSE passes at grades A\* to G are rising and are above national and comparator councils. However, despite this, the proportion of young people achieving five A\* to C grades is low, with only 10 young people out of 98 (10%) achieving this in 2007. This proportion is well below the overall attainment of young people in the area which currently stands at 59.2%. Of the remainder who did not achieve five A\* to C grades, 26 pupils gained a range of alternative qualifications such as ASDAN, CLAIT and NVQs. It is worth noting that approximately 40% of the Key Stage 4 cohort of pupils had special educational needs.

47. The council has recognised the need to improve educational outcomes and has recently appointed a head teacher for the creation of a 'virtual school' for looked after children. There are examples of good practice in helping looked

after children attain highly, as at Alder Grange High School. This school has a very clear focus on engaging looked after children and their carers to promote attainment. This is achieved through a range of options such as creating the 'Ski Club' where young people can develop social skills, as well as gaining confidence through accreditation for their achievements.

48. School attendance is effectively monitored and prompt intervention has reduced the proportion of young people absent for 25 days or more to 6.9%, which is below national and similar council's average. This strategy augurs well for future improvements in school attainment. The number of looked after children permanently excluded is very low; there are none excluded from primary schools and only three were excluded from secondary schools in 2005/06. The council is aware of the need to challenge the use of unofficial exclusions because there is evidence that some young people are told 'not to come to school' and, for them, support to access learning is not provided in a timely manner. Foster carers report children in their care are sometimes unable to join in school trips due to problems of obtaining consent. This means they are unable to participate in outings alongside friends and other children and young people.

49. There is a range of innovative programmes and schemes such as the 'Looking ahead – Careers and Employability Scheme', to support young people in accessing further education and employment. This service secures employment opportunities for looked after young people and currently offers part-time paid employment to 41 young people aged 14–19. The council reports that it supports 22 formerly looked after young people studying at university. Young people accessing the leaving care service are well supported and most are found suitable accommodation, although the range of options in some parts of the county is limited. The council recognises the need to work closely with adult services to improve the smooth transition for those requiring continued support. There is an acknowledgment of the need to further develop the use of pathway planning and a more user friendly form has been introduced in consultation with young people. The proportion of looked after children aged 16–18 who are not in education, employment or training is higher at 26.5% than the regional average of 17.2% and the national average of 20.3%.

50. Children who are looked after are helped to make a positive contribution by an effective children's rights service. They have good access to a well-managed advocacy and complaints service. The Young People's Panel gives some the opportunity to participate in service design and the decision-making process, through attendance at the Children's Services Board meetings.

## Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Inadequate  Adequate  Good  Outstanding

**51. 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>Services to help young people make progress at school are good and the use of data to raise achievement is excellent.</p> <p>Learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early.</p> <p>Children with complex needs receive good coordinated assessment.</p> <p>Direct payments are used well to match provision to needs.</p> <p>The quality of information provided to families, especially around children's centres, is good.</p> <p>Children and young people participate well in their reviews and a careful approach is taken to hear and act on their views.</p>	<p>There is a narrow range of specialised learning and training opportunities post-16.</p>

52. The local council and its partners are working well to meet the needs of children and improve their outcomes. Good account is taken of the wide range of backgrounds, specific circumstances and cultures represented in Lancashire. Good progress has been made in dealing with areas for development identified in school inspections, the APA and in the actions identified in the CYPP. The strategic review of special schools, including their co-location with mainstream schools, is being managed well.

53. The proportion of statements of special educational need completed within the 18-week target has improved and those scrutinised during the joint area review were of good quality. The number of appeals concerning statements of special educational need fell from 63 in the academic year 2005/06 to 43 in 2006/07, well below the national figure. Many appeals are resolved early through an effective conciliation process and positive communication with parents and carers. There is increased availability of in-county placements. In 2007/08, the authority placed 426 pupils in independent and non-maintained special schools compared with 396 in 2006/07. The Inclusive Continuum Action Plan (ICAP) clearly indicates how the local area will reduce the level of placements outside the county. There is rigorous monitoring of providers and a programme of timely visits to all out-of-authority placements.

54. Multi-agency working is good. There is evidence of improvements in the quality of life of some babies and some very young children who have a disability. For example, hearing impairment is often identified pre-birth and support for babies can be put in place very early. Other good examples include the multi-professional intervention for children showing early signs of autism, with well-planned integrated approaches in the Central Lancashire PCT area. The Portage services make good use of referrals for early identification of additional needs. Health professionals also identify needs early, although some parents spoken to identified that health visitors do not always have sufficient training or understanding of severe complex needs, particularly as children get older. The Early Support multi-agency panels coordinate packages of support for 0 to five year olds, preparing children effectively for entry to nursery education. There is good support for children with life-threatening conditions and for families who experience unexpected traumas.

55. Safeguarding arrangements are good. Staff are very aware of the need for good partnership working and close involvement with parents and carers. Access to short breaks is good. Parents welcome access to direct payments and the take-up is rising. About 261 young persons currently benefit from direct payments, enabling parents and carers to access the services they need. For example, many parents have used direct payments to fund better support at home. This is mainly due to dissatisfaction with some private providers of services where parents report there are too many staff changes and a perceived lack of training. The council and partners, including voluntary organisations, provide a wide range of sources of information and guidance about care services but parents report they would welcome better quality assurance of private providers. Personal, social and health education programmes in schools are relevant, for example they cover safe behaviour, sexual health and self-protection specific to young people who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

56. Good early support for children ensures that as many as possible attend mainstream education. This greater inclusion is promoted particularly well through the use of Additionally Resourced Mainstream Schools (ARMS) and ESAP funding. Provision for special educational needs in Lancashire schools is good and, where it is acknowledged to not be good enough, improvement strategies are in place. Special schools work well in partnership with the local council and with mainstream providers and settings. A good example of this partnership is seen through the work of the Head teacher Study Group, whose remit is to challenge the council about all aspects of provision and make recommendations for improvement. The council and its partners invariably respond effectively to these recommendations according to a group of headteachers. Training for special schools staff is very good and networks of coordinators enable the sharing of good practice. The monitoring of children educated at home and those who are hospitalised is also good. There is an effective framework for tackling behavioural difficulties, for example through the use of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning programme. Although no schools inspected in 2007/08 were judged inadequate in managing

behaviour, some schools still find this a real challenge and fixed-term exclusions are above average. The council is monitoring closely the context for these exclusions so that targeted support can be provided. Better programmes at Key Stage 4, agreed managed moves, a fresh start in new schools and a protocol for fair access mid-year are beginning to pay dividends. To date, 304 young people at risk of permanent exclusion have been successfully admitted to secondary schools as a result.

57. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well according to recent school inspection findings. The use of targets and data to raise standards is excellent. The school effectiveness service has refined its bank of data to analyse progress by different types of learning needs. The Lancashire School Information Profiles support schools' self-evaluation. Provision is then challenged by school improvement partners and advisers. Results at all key stages are fluctuating year-on-year but, over time, the trend is improving. For example, in English, more children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve the expected level at Key Stage 2 as a result of well-targeted support. At Key Stage 3 the picture is mixed, with an improvement in results in English in 2007 but not in mathematics or science. Although still considerable, the gap in achievement at GCSE is narrowing and, in 2007, 6.3% of young people achieved five GCSE at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, against 2.8% in 2003. There are examples of outstanding progress, such as the group of young people who are continuing their studies into further and higher education. Access to recreation and leisure programmes is good. Events organised in schools are excellent and parents praise provision, such as the sports, theatre and art events in Burnley. There are successful summer schools and, in response to a survey of views of children, parents and carers, access to after-school facilities is being improved. However, transport remains an issue and the availability of staff to support young people who, for example, need support for basic hygiene and toileting, is limited.

58. A wide range of methods is used for gathering young people's views and they are able to influence council decisions. Major projects, such as the building of new schools, have provided opportunities for young people to take part in decision-making. Parents report that gathering children's views is high on the agenda of social workers. Participation in reviews is good; however, the voice of young people who are on ESAP is not heard sufficiently because in some schools reviews for them lack structure and they are not consistently monitored. About 180 young people have accessed the advocacy service and the work of the Lancashire Children's Rights service is good. The 'Powerful Voices Network' is leading a young disabled people campaign for 13–25 year olds in the north-west of the county. The Lancashire Education Inclusion Service holds events for children and young people who are educated at home to seek their views on services.

59. Parents praised the excellent service provided by social workers and health services at key points of transition. All Year 9 students who have special educational needs have transition plans. There is good monitoring of each young person's destination post-16 and over 90% of young people have a personal plan when they move to adult services. However, despite some improvements in the post-16 curriculum, the range of opportunities in some further education or work-related training is limited. Better information sharing between health, schools, colleges and other providers is improving access but some young people still experience unhelpful travel difficulties. The LSC, the Young People's Service (Connexions) and the Integrated Assessment and Family Support Teams collaborate effectively and are aware of the need to reduce the skills gap and seek better qualifications at age 19. There are specific performance targets to increase the percentage of young people in education, employment or training further and, in 2007, post-16 participation rates improved to 72.2% from 70.2% in 2006.

## Other issues identified for further investigation

### Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)

60. **The quality of service provided and the outcomes achieved by children and young people using CAMHS is adequate.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Early intervention provided by universal services.</p> <p>The quality of assessment and treatment provided when it is available.</p> <p>Provision of substance misuse services.</p> <p>Good provision of treatment and care at The Junction.</p>	<p>Inconsistency of access to more acute services especially for 16–17 year olds and those with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)/ Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).</p> <p>No consistent county-wide approach to commissioning of CAMHS.</p> <p>No 24-hour service in some areas of the county.</p> <p>Some older teenagers are admitted on to adult mental health wards.</p>

61. Joint working between the three PCTs in relation to the delivery of an integrated CAMHS in the county is at an early stage of development. The 2007 APA letter indicated that the reorganisation of the eight PCTs into three had impacted adversely on the rate of change, particularly around services for 16 and 17 year olds and 24-hour cover. These weaknesses in provision still remain. Provision for early intervention through universal services such as schools is good but access to more acute CAMHS and transition arrangements to adult services for specific groups are inconsistent across the county.

62. Schools play a strong role in providing advice and guidance for those in their care. Early intervention work through a range of initiatives is in place, for example 'The Place 2 B' in primary schools in East Lancashire. Services accessed by children and young people are provided by appropriately trained staff. However, waiting times for more acute support (tier 3) in some locations such as north Lancashire are lengthy. Access for 16–17 year olds, looked after children and those with ADHD and ASD across the county is variable. This is disappointing because when tier 3 services are received, the outcomes are generally positive according to service users. For children and young people who require the most intense range of service (tier 4) there is good provision of treatment and care at The Junction in Lancaster. This eight-bedded unit is jointly funded by all three PCTs and managed by Lancashire Care Foundation Trust. This is a clear example of the positive impact of effective integrated working between the PCTs.

63. Twenty-four hour access to CAMHS advice and support and out-of-hours provision is not universally available, with none in North Lancashire and limited provision in Central Lancashire. The county's own performance outcome measures indicate that admission of young people aged 16 years and over to adult mental health wards takes place in some areas. This is due to a lack of availability of adolescent beds suitable for young people's needs. There is a protocol in place to support transition of young people from CAMHS to adult mental health services but where it does not align with referral criteria for adult services it sometimes results in children, particularly those with ADHD, not receiving appropriate services.

64. Referral routes into CAMHS differ across the county. For example, Blackpool PCT accepts only referrals from GPs whereas East Lancashire Hospitals Trust accepts referrals from all routes. There is no consistent county-wide care pathway and this creates inconsistencies in access to services.

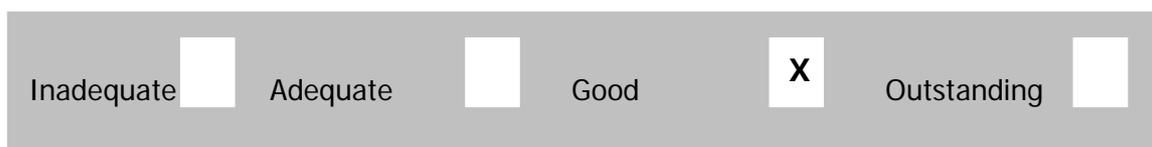
65. Staff working with children and young people are advised and supported well in identifying possible mental health problems and making appropriate referrals. Primary mental health workers, education link workers, CAMHS staff and learning mentors work well in collaboration with schools and have been effective in improving transition, where required, across the different tiers of service. Specific initiatives such as school inclusion officers in secondary schools, provide staff with increased opportunities to discuss the needs of specific children and young people about whose mental health or emotional well-being there may be concerns. In primary schools and children's centres the implementation of national programmes such as 'Nurture' and support from organisations including the NSPCC provide good quality guidance for staff.

66. When children and young people receive services, the assessment, treatment and support provided is usually good and takes into account the diverse needs of the population. Cultural competency training has been received by all CAMHS staff and is being delivered to staff from universal services throughout 2008 with particular attention being paid to the needs of

Travellers and those in transition from one service to another. Recruitment of CAMHS workers from Black and minority ethnic groups is progressing but it is too early to indicate the effectiveness of this initiative. Inclusion teams working in primary and junior schools provide effective multi-agency support by including the involvement of learning support workers, emotional behavioural and social needs assessment, learning mentors, family liaison and access to primary mental health workers to advise parents on managing challenging behaviours. Secondary schools and colleges benefit from advice and information made available by link workers and the recent appointment of 10 additional social workers is intended to give further impetus to this work across the county. Support for carers of looked after children is inconsistent. In response to this, specific initiatives such as the effective project in East Lancashire have been developed with funding through CAMHS. Training has been received by staff in CAMHS and universal services for the CAF but at present implementation is limited to key areas of the county.

67. Mental health services have made good progress working with services for young offenders and children and young people involved in substance misuse. The 2007 APA indicated there was minimal representation from the PCTs on the Youth Offending Team management board. This has now been rectified with the appointment of the Chief Executive from East Lancashire PCT to the board. Review of the provision of substance misuse services led to re-commissioning of services by the Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Team with an increase of 250% in the numbers of children and young people accessing support. However, engagement is not consistently effective due to the unpredictable lifestyle of the client group and more innovative practice is required to ensure there is improved take-up of referrals to the more acute (tier 3) services.

## Service management



## Capacity to improve



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Partnership working based on shared ambitions which are aligned with wider corporate ambitions.</p> <p>Real engagement with children and young people that influences strategic planning and service delivery.</p> <p>Leadership provided by the council in developing trust arrangements.</p> <p>The availability of staff and resources in place to deliver the priorities in the CYPP.</p>	<p>Lack of robust performance management in some service areas to ensure that all planned improvements are realised.</p> <p>Gaps in targets and milestones in some service plans including the needs of all sections of the community.</p>

69. These judgements take into account all children's services provided by the council and its partners as well as the evidence gathered for the specific investigations in this joint area review. Good partnership working underpins shared ambitions for children and young people; this is clearly articulated in the CYPP and reflected in wider corporate plans. Children and young people have a significant say in strategic planning and the way services are delivered. Staff and resources are in place to deliver the priorities, and most services have been improved. However, joint commissioning is underdeveloped and performance management has not been sufficiently robust, particularly in the fostering service, to ensure improvements across all services. Education and health outcomes overall are generally good.

70. Ambitions for children and young people in Lancashire are good. The CYPP contains clear ambitions and objectives. It is underpinned by good partnership working and based on an extensive needs analysis which includes detailed profiles at district level and was used to inform local priority days at which views about priorities were agreed.

71. The needs of children and young people feature strongly in partners' plans. Ambition Lancashire, the community strategy, has two general overarching principles, 'narrowing the gap' and 'promoting active citizenship', and three specific themes for children and young people. Agency plans, such as the council's corporate strategy, the children's directorate plan and the three PCTs' development and business plans align well with Ambition Lancashire and the CYPP. The children and young people's strategic partnership (the partnership) has good representation from all statutory and wider partners, including the voluntary, community, faith and private sectors, and there is broad agreement with the CYPP. District councils are fully represented and district local strategic partnerships have local children's partnerships as theme groups, each of which is developing a local CYPP. This provides a sound inter-agency structure for planning.

72. Prioritisation by partners is good. The CYPP is reviewed annually and its priorities revised. These are now better focused. The current CYPP contains 12 key priorities reduced from 29 in the first plan. They reflect national and local priorities, for example reducing obesity and teenage conceptions and improving opportunities to access and enjoy sports, leisure and culture.

73. The partnership has consulted well in its development and reviews of the CYPP. For example, the partnership agreed a single process for the review of the plan, the development of the second local area agreement and district trust partnership work which is informing the new CYPP 2008–11. The partnership has adopted a children and young people's charter for engagement, which was written by young people and states clearly the way in which they want services to involve them. Consultation with children and young people is extensive and imaginative. Methods include surveys, participation events, youth councils, and associate membership of the partnership for 20 school councils, use of a leading social networking site to influence the design of schools under the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme and direct consultation with disadvantaged groups including disabled and looked after children. Five partner consultation events to develop the CYPP were introduced and closed by children and young people who then worked in groups to develop their views. Parents were also present to contribute to the events. Consequently, the CYPP is representative of local people's needs and aspirations.

74. Agency and strategic plans are well aligned with the CYPP. However, targets, milestones and responsibilities in service plans are not sufficiently precise. Some are of a high standard containing all these elements, such as the School Effectiveness Service plan, while others are less precise. This is also reflected in equalities and diversity issues. The partnership demonstrates a clear commitment to equality and diversity issues in the CYPP. This is carried through into some service plans and is effective. For example, to raise the educational attainment of Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils, 14 community homework centres have been established with improved outcomes. In 2007, 59% who attended achieved five A\* to C grades at GCSE compared with the county average of 47% for all Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils. However, equalities and diversity issues are not carried through systematically into all action plans.

75. Medium-term financial planning in agencies supports well the CYPP and the shift of resources to preventative services. Additional funds have been allocated for a new head teacher to oversee 'The Virtual School' for looked after children and 10 new appointments in schools to focus on improving children and young people's mental health and emotional well-being.

76. The overall capacity of the local partnership's services is good. Partnership working is cooperative and positive. The council has shown good leadership in facilitating the partnership's establishment of children's trust arrangements against a background of PCT reorganisation and political differences between the county council and district councils. The seniority and commitment of

partnership members ensures that decisions are made collectively and effected in individual agencies. However, where decisions will be taken in the future is not as clear to partners at this stage, with the formation of a trust board with commissioning responsibilities alongside the existing executive partnership. The voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) is well represented on the partnership. There are five representatives and one will chair the positive contribution theme group and join the executive. The responsibilities of the lead councillors and the Director for Children's Services are discharged appropriately. Children's scrutiny is generally well engaged with the children's agenda, for example recent task and finish groups highlighted inconsistent access to CAMHS services, although the monitoring of services for looked after children is underdeveloped.

77. Council services are well linked to medium-term financial planning and value for money is good. The council has the financial capacity to deliver its priorities. The children's directorate has contributed £1.8 million of efficiency savings in 2007–08. Joint commissioning and pooling of budgets is limited but agencies are represented in the partnership by sufficiently senior officers to ensure that resources can be adjusted.

78. The partnership generally has the staff needed to deliver its priorities. There are no major recruitment or retention issues in the area. Workforce planning in the children's directorate is good and a joint workforce planning strategy has been agreed by the partnership which includes schools, the VCFS and the private sector.

79. Performance management in the area is adequate. It is generally good in the council but less well developed in the partnership. Although the partnership is monitoring performance it is not actively managing it. The council prepares a performance scorecard for the partnership based on data provided by partners, some directly inputted. Traffic light indicators show whether targets are on track. As part of developing trust arrangements, the partnership recently commissioned an audit of its performance management. It has accepted the main messages of needing a sharper focus on progress against the priorities in the CYPP and of actively challenging progress. It has agreed an appropriate action plan.

80. The council has a good performance management framework. Performance Improvement Boards (PIBs) provide challenge on a planned basis for progress against the five ambitions in the directorate plan. A matrix of priorities which contribute to the ambition is reported to the PIB quarterly. Children's cabinet members report to a cross-party Cabinet Committee on Performance Improvement (CCPI). A performance scorecard is used for challenge within the directorate and corporately supported by extensive data available to managers. The framework has contributed to service improvements, such as improving educational attainment.

81. The council's response to external inspection findings is variable. An audit in November 2007 of the council's response to the Bichard Report on protecting children identified sound measures in place including agreements on rechecking of staff and checking of contractors' staff. The audit recommended action in additional areas, which the council accepted. However, the council did not respond robustly enough to the fostering inspection of August 2007 which judged the service to be inadequate. It did not ensure that the action plan was fully implemented. Whilst action was undertaken with parts of the plan, it was not adequately performance managed. Staff and managers did not ensure that fostering regulations were complied with fully and that children were placed safely.

82. Children and young people's contribution to performance management is good. Outcomes include changed facilities at health clinics to improve confidentiality in interviews. The Children's Services Board, a cabinet committee, has two young people's representatives with voting rights who regularly present reports and participate in discussions. The response to complaints is agency-based but the partnership takes no overview or coordinating role of them.

83. Capacity to improve is adequate. There is a record of improvements in many services but this is not consistent with slow developments in some, such as CAMHS and the fostering service. The area has the capacity and the leadership to make progress and the partnership is well placed to implement the revised CYPP. However, joint commissioning is in the early stages of development and effective performance management arrangements to ensure safe outcomes and improvement across all services are not robust.

## Annex A

### **MOST RECENTLY PUBLISHED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN LANCASHIRE**

#### **Summary**

Lancashire County Council consistently delivers services for children and young people that are good and make a difference to the lives of children and young people. The contribution of services to improving outcomes in all areas is good. There is some variation in outcomes across the wide range of social and economic contexts within such a large county, but the council is aware of these issues and is tackling variations rigorously. The council pays good attention to the need to design services to reflect local needs and to involve the local communities and councils in the process. There is effective consultation with young people to ensure that services are designed to meet their needs. Effective partnership working is a strength of the council; there is good capacity for improvement due to an effective senior leadership team with a proven record of responding to challenges to bring about positive change.

The full annual performance assessment can be found at:

[http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=3149&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa\\_2007\\_888.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=3149&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa_2007_888.pdf)

## Annex B

### CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Outcomes for children and young people in Lancashire are generally good. The 2007 APA reported that the council consistently delivers services for children and young people that are good and make a difference to the lives of children and young people. The joint area review confirmed many of the strengths reported in the APA but identified important weaknesses in the safeguarding arrangements for children and young people who are fostered.

2. Service management is good. Good partnership working underpins shared ambitions for children and young people. The children and young people's strategic partnership has good representation from all statutory and wider partners and there is broad agreement with the CYPP. Agency and strategic plans are well aligned with the CYPP. However, targets, milestones and responsibilities in service plans are not sufficiently precise. Consultation with children and young people is extensive and imaginative. Council services are well linked to medium-term financial planning and value for money is good. Workforce planning in the children's directorate is good and a joint workforce planning strategy has been agreed by the partnership, which includes schools, the VCFS and the private sector. Capacity to improve further is adequate. The area has the capacity and the leadership to make further progress.

3. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is generally good. All schools are now engaged with the Healthy Schools Programme and work in this area earned the council Beacon status in 2007. Immunisation rates are in line with or better than comparator councils and national averages. Teenage conception rates have fallen overall and are now showing a 14.6% reduction from their base year rate in 1998. There is good attention to the health needs of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Provision for children and young people requiring support through the CAMHS is adequate. Early intervention through universal services such as schools is good but access to more acute CAMHS is inconsistent. This is particularly so for 16–17 year olds, looked after children and those with ADHD and ASD.

4. Children and young people appear safe and arrangements to ensure this are adequate. Whilst core child protection arrangements are good, a significant service area designed to protect the most vulnerable children, those in foster care, is inadequate due to the lack of compliance with national minimum standards. Agencies are committed to sharing information about children in need and to put in place a range of support and preventative services to reduce the risk of family breakdown and harm to children. Of particular note is the work with families experiencing domestic violence. The LSCB is well established and provides a good lead on reducing risks to children. There is very good focus on safeguarding children from dangerous offenders in the community, reducing

accidents, tackling bullying, and racist incidents. Duty and referral arrangements are effective and assessments are completed within good timescales. Fewer children than in similar councils are subject to a child protection plan and those that have one are allocated a key worker and have their plans reviewed on time. Despite a range of strategies across the county, the numbers of children who are seriously injured or killed on the roads has not fallen sufficiently.

5. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and to achieve well is good. The council effectively supports early years and Foundation Stage provision to ensure that quality is good, particularly for nursery schools. The strong start children receive to their education continues across all key stages. GCSE results continue to improve and are equally strong with 59% of young people attaining five or more A\* to C grades of which almost 47% included English and mathematics. These results are above those for similar councils and the national average. Whilst there has been an increase in the numbers of looked after young people gaining five or more A\* to C GCSEs in 2007, the figure is still well below the overall attainment of young people in Lancashire. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. The use of targets and data to raise standards for these pupils is excellent.

6. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is very good. Consultation with children and young people is extensive and imaginative. The partnership has adopted a children and young people's charter for engagement, which was written by young people and states clearly the way in which they would want services to involve them. Methods include surveys, participation events, youth councils, associate membership of the partnership for 20 school councils, use of a leading social networking site to influence the design of schools under the BSF programme and direct consultation with disadvantaged groups including disabled children and looked after children.

7. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good. The council, with its partners, has developed an effective strategy for the development of its 14–19 provision. There is good collaborative work between all partners in the Travel to Learn areas across the county to develop enhanced provision and to prepare for the delivery of the new diplomas, although not all schools are yet fully engaged. Standards achieved by young people at ages 16 and 19 are improving, but are not consistent across all areas. The proportions of young people gaining Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications by the age of 19 are improving and are above those in similar councils. In addition, success rates in work-based learning for all groups of children and young people, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups, are above those found nationally. The number of young people successfully completing apprenticeships has also increased significantly. Young people accessing the leaving care service are well supported to access further education and

employment and most are found suitable accommodation, although the range of options in some parts of the county is limited. However, the proportion of looked after children who are aged 16–18 and not in education; employment or training is higher than the regional average.

## Annex C

### 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 Lancashire 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 an additional investigation into mental health services for children and young people. 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).