



**Better
education
and care**

Joint area review

London Borough of Bromley
Children's Services Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

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

1. This joint area review was conducted using the arrangements required under Section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of eight inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), the Healthcare Commission (CHAI), the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and the Audit Commission. The review was undertaken according to the requirements of the *Framework for the inspection of children's services*.

2. The review was linked to the contemporaneous corporate assessment of the local council by the Audit Commission and its findings are represented in the relevant part of the corporate assessment report.

3. This review describes the outcomes achieved by children and young people growing up in the Bromley area and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being. Joint area reviews focus on the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and are well prepared to secure economic well-being.

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

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

- a self-assessment undertaken by local public service providers
- a survey of children and young people
- performance data
- the findings of the contemporaneous monitoring inspection of the youth service
- planning documents
- information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day care provision
- evidence gathered during the earlier Youth Offending Team (YOT) inspection
- briefings from staff within inspectorates, commissions and other public bodies in contact with local providers.

6. The second stage involved inspection fieldwork. This included studies of how far local services have improved outcomes for a small sample of children and young people, some of whom have the most complex needs, and a study of provision in two neighbourhoods: Penge/Anerley and The Crays/Ramsden. It also included gathering evidence on 10 key judgements, selected because of their critical importance to improving outcomes for children and young people in the local area. Evidence included discussions with elected members of the local authority and their equivalents in other public agencies, officers from these agencies, service users and community representatives. A review of case files for children and young people receiving support from a number of local agencies was also included.

Context

7. Bromley is the largest geographical London borough, stretching from highly urbanised areas in the north-west to more rural areas in the south and south-east. It is a place of contrasts. Overall, the area is relatively prosperous but certain wards, mostly located on the periphery of the borough, have high levels of deprivation. The 2001 census showed that 15.7% of those aged 0-19 identified their ethnicity as other than white British and nine wards show an above borough average number of people from minority ethnic backgrounds. A distinctive settled traveller community, the largest in Britain, is located in the north-east of the borough. In 2001, 24% of the population (71,136) were aged 0 to 19 years, broadly average for England.

8. There are 77 primary, 18 secondary and five special schools; four secondary schools have specialist provision for children with significant additional educational needs. Almost 18% of children and young people have special educational needs; of these, 3.4% are statemented. There are 272 children who are looked after by the local authority.

9. The Children and Young People Department was formed in May 2006. A senior officer responsible for children's health in the Primary Care Trust (PCT) is a member of the Department's management team. The Bromley Children and Young People Trust was established in October 2006. The Trust's Board is chaired by the Director for Children and Young People. Much of the work of the Trust is progressing through 10 multi-agency strategy groups which are in varying stages of development.

10. London South Learning and Skills Council works closely with the local authority, two colleges of further education, three training providers and schools in implementing the 14-19 strategy. Post-16 education and training is provided by 16, 11-18 schools; two FE colleges; three special schools, and three main work-based training providers. Entry to Employment (E2E) provision is managed by Bromley Springboard Trust, with approximately 50 places for learners. Adult and community learning, including family learning, is provided by Bromley Adult Education College and the Bromley Children Project.

11. The Bromley National Health Service (NHS) PCT provides primary care for children in Bromley. The Bromley Hospital NHS Trust is the main provider of acute health services, children's hospital services and accident and emergency services. Children's mental health services are provided by Bromley NHS PCT, Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust and the South London and Maudsley NHS Trust. The trusts providing health services for children, including the London Ambulance Service NHS Trust, fall within NHS London as the Strategic Health Authority for London.

12. There are no Young Offender Institutions in the area.

Summary Report

Outcomes for children and young people

13. **Outcomes for most children and young people in Bromley are generally good.** There are inadequacies for vulnerable groups and in more deprived areas. Children and young people are generally healthy and generally safe. National indicators show good health outcomes, although less so for some vulnerable groups and in deprived areas. Fewer children are referred to social care services than in similar authorities. Fewer are looked after but too many of these children, around half, are placed outside of the borough. Satisfactory arrangements protect children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from abuse or neglect. Most children and young people enjoy school and achieve well. Standards are above those nationally, with some outstanding attainment, but opportunities to achieve in provision offered by the youth service are insufficiently challenging. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities mostly make good progress but few looked after children leave care with a good qualification. Improved school place planning maintains accessibility in local communities and the opening of a new secondary school has addressed the need for additional provision. Leadership and management of schools are mostly good, although rates of attendance continue as a major weakness, with authorised absence especially high. Permanent exclusions have reduced and are now broadly in line with those nationally. There are many opportunities for children and young people to make decisions and contribute to services and their communities. Plans are in place to ensure that key messages inform the strategic direction of the Trust. Some services are outstanding in helping children and young people to respond to challenges in their lives, but provision varies. Most young people are able to achieve economic well-being and are prepared well for working life. Outcomes are good for the majority, but there are considerable weaknesses for some vulnerable groups. Very few young people are not in education, employment or training (NEET) after the age of 16 and the number progressing to higher education is high. Participation by teenage mothers and young people who offend remains low, as do their achievements and the achievements of those completing E2E programmes. Transition planning for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is unsatisfactory. Pathway planning is poor for those who are looked after. Of the small quantity of local authority

housing, one-third is below the decent housing standard. Schemes to provide semi-independent, temporary and settled accommodation for vulnerable groups are insufficient to meet need.

The impact of local services

14. **The impact of local services on improving outcomes for children and young people is adequate overall.** There are some good features. The council's contribution to delivering outcomes is adequate, with good features in all outcome areas. Services provide clear benefits to many children and young people, for example, the Bromley Children Project, but significant weaknesses remain in provision for Bromley's most vulnerable groups.

15. Overall, education services are good and those for social care are adequate, as is the health service for children. Children and young people appear to be safe. The recently established Children and Young People Department is engaging with its partners in building on some very good practice on the ground and learning from service failures. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP), provides an early agenda for strategic development and priorities for the Children's Trust are emerging. However, an overarching strategic plan that identifies priorities against timescales for decision making is not yet in place. As a result, key decisions about commissioning, as well as the sustainability of some preventative services and grant-funded initiatives targeted at vulnerable groups and deprived areas, have not been taken.

16. The self-assessment identifies many of the strengths in service provision, but it does not sufficiently address current weaknesses or key areas for development. Given the track record of service improvement, including for some vulnerable groups, together with strong leadership and commitment by key elected members and clear leadership and management in key areas from good quality officers, albeit with gaps at senior levels, there is adequate capacity to improve further.

Being healthy

17. **The impact of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is adequate.** There are some good features. Some good integrated provision is improving outcomes for most children and young people although not all services work together effectively to address child health inequalities. General practitioners' (GPs) contribution to achieving the Every Child Matters outcomes are in line with the national average.

18. Few mothers smoke in pregnancy and the number who start breastfeeding is high. The percentage of low birth weight babies is in line with the national average, but has risen slightly over the past year and is higher in the more deprived areas in the borough. Immunisation rates are still too low to prevent outbreaks of infectious diseases such as mumps, measles or rubella. The overall teenage conception rate is reducing and is now just below the national average,

but there is a concerning increase in the incidence of teenage pregnancies among looked after young women and care leavers.

19. A range of good school-based health promotion initiatives include a successful Healthy Schools programme and sports provision. Young people referred to services through the YOT do not always receive an adequate level of support for healthy lifestyles.

20. Child and Adolescent mental Health Services (CAMHS) are improving well and are now satisfactory. Waiting times for assessment and most treatments have improved, but there are still some gaps in services for the more vulnerable. Good and developing inter-agency provision of community-based CAMHS is delivered in partnership with the voluntary sector.

21. Looked after children's health needs are met well and improving. The annual target for completed health assessments is well within reach. The health needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are adequately addressed, although this is not consistent for all age groups. The Phoenix Early Support programme is an exemplary model of integrated service provision for pre-school children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families. The Children's Trust is working well to improve services for school-aged children.

Staying safe

22. **The impact of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is adequate.** There are strengths in this area but also significant weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements within the youth offending service. Some effective actions address road and community safety, but insufficient strategic attention is given to addressing fear of crime. Some children and young people report feeling unsafe in parts of their neighbourhood. Some good coordinated action promotes anti-bullying, but a comprehensive borough-wide strategy is not yet in place. The authority recognises the need to raise awareness of racist behaviour and to address the relatively low rate of reporting of racist incidents in schools.

23. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has been established on a sound footing. Staff vetting procedures are mainly secure, with some weaknesses where staff are not recruited formally by Bromley. Strategies to identify children affected by domestic violence are broadly satisfactory, although forthcoming changes in arrangements within the Metropolitan Police are not yet reflected in the involvement of the borough police in safeguarding locally.

24. Practice and operational management within children's social care services is satisfactory overall, with some good features following a period of sustained improvement. Some good services support children in need and prevent children becoming looked after, but capacity in some teams including the Children in Need Teams and the Disabled Children's Team is very stretched.

The work of the Family Focus Team is insufficiently targeted on young people at risk of family breakdown. Overall, support for adolescents is not well coordinated and the authority faces a very considerable challenge to ensure the new adolescent service can be developed alongside urgent action needed to address the very serious weaknesses in the youth offending service.

25. For looked after children, placement choice for challenging adolescents and children and young people with complex needs is limited and there is no coherent published placement strategy.

26. Overall, there is a lack of strategic clarity and operational planning of services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Despite some recent progress in increasing capacity in residential short-break provision for disabled children, capacity in other short-break provision is insufficient to meet need. Coordination and clear signposting of information to parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is currently patchy.

Enjoying and achieving

27. **The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good.** Actions taken to help schools achieve and maintain high standards and to reduce disparity in performance are very good. Improved school place planning maintains accessibility in local communities and the opening of a new secondary school has addressed the need for additional provision. Good priority is given to promoting strong leadership and enabling schools to evaluate their own progress. More remains to be done in tackling authorised term-time absences, but the authority has taken steps to tackle this issue more robustly. Progress has been made in reducing exclusions and the number of fixed-term exclusions has dramatically reduced. Standards in early years education and care are good and the majority of children are well prepared for school. Most early learning provision is good or better.

28. Support to help looked after children enjoy and achieve is now better focused on achievement. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make mostly good progress. Reconfiguration of specialist special educational needs (SEN) provision to reduce reliance on placements outside the authority, although slow to have been addressed, is progressing well. Although reducing, statement levels remain well above the average and the number of tribunal referrals is twice that nationally.

29. Most families are well informed about educational matters. For some young people, the impact of community leisure and recreation facilities is limited by access and affordability, in particular for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Making a positive contribution

30. **The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is adequate.** There are some good features. However, there are weaknesses in the Youth Offending Team services. Consultation and involvement in decision making lacks strategic coordination and participation is not sufficiently widespread; this is being addressed well through good planning and new appointments.

31. A range of good multi-agency programmes and projects successfully support vulnerable groups in managing change and responding to challenges in their lives. However, the continuation of funding for some programmes is not secure. Support for some vulnerable groups, such as young carers, does not enable them to lead full and active lives. For this group in particular, access to recreation and leisure activities is limited by their caring responsibilities.

32. There are too few opportunities for young people who offend to participate in diversionary activities and too little attention given to restorative justice. Delay in establishing a Youth Inclusion Support Panel (YISP), significantly impacts on the authority's capacity to intervene where children and young people are most at risk of offending.

33. Children and young people using the Hollybank respite unit report a good service and increased satisfaction. However, some parents and carers involved in this development have expressed strong concerns about the development of the service. Plans are in hand to improve independent advocacy services for looked after children and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Achieving economic well-being

34. **The impact of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is adequate and improving.** There are some good features. Good collaborative partnerships have helped to reduce NEET figures to below 5%. However, information on the participation, success and destinations of those from specific vulnerable groups is insufficiently detailed.

35. Providers have worked together well to increase the range of vocational and progression opportunities for young people aged 14-16. Guidance and support are generally good, although some young people from vulnerable groups are not sufficiently aware of educational opportunities available to them. Not all provision is sufficiently accessible to some potentially under-achieving groups, including young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, teenage mothers and young people who offend. There has been inadequate progress to address unsatisfactory transition planning to adult services for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The authority recognises improvement is necessary in poor pathway planning for looked after children.

36. There is an increased take up of tax credits and educational maintenance allowances by young people. Some parents or carers have restricted access to affordable childcare facilities. Action to regenerate deprived communities is successful when driven by a coherent strategy, as in Penge and the Ramsden Estate. It is less effective in St Mary's Cray where insufficient resources have been invested.

37. Housing support has reduced the number of children and young people living in poor accommodation but a shortage of affordable housing prevents some vulnerable young people from gaining permanent tenancies. Families with young children spend too long in temporary hostel accommodation and arrangements to ensure care leavers have access to settled accommodation at age 18 are inadequate. The level of direct payments to young people with learning disabilities is satisfactory but some parents have insufficient support for adaptations to their homes.

Service management

38. **The management of services for children and young people is adequate.** Ambitions set out in the CYPP are good, with some challenging targets. The needs analysis underpinning the plan is adequate overall. The engagement of children and young people and parents/carers in the production of the CYPP is adequate. Agreed priorities for action are adequately based on identified need, but there is insufficient prioritisation of some vulnerable groups, such as school-aged children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, young carers and young people who offend. Sufficient consideration has not been given to diversity, including the celebration of cultural diversity, and to ensuring that the needs of vulnerable groups are met.

39. There are some very good examples of inter-agency working to support children and young people with significant needs. While there is also some innovative and high quality preventative provision, for example, the Bromley Children Project, this is currently fragmented. There has been no overarching strategic review to identify the existing interventions which offer best value for money and user satisfaction. It is unclear how mainstream and statutory services are to be fully integrated with preventative services in local areas.

40. Capacity to deliver priorities is adequate. The quality of officers is good but capacity is stretched in some areas. Some changes, including addressing the SEN review, implementation of the Disability Access strategy, tackling attendance in schools and establishing the YISP, have been slow to come about. Corporate parenting responsibilities are at a relatively early stage. Relatively low grants from government and low council tax necessitate a background of financial stringency. Despite this, the council provides good value for money in its services for children, and budget management is effective. Some funding has been particularly limited over time, for example, spending on the youth service. There is a significant backlog of planned maintenance in schools. Following consultation with schools, an increasing

contribution from the Dedicated Schools Grant is funding improvements. The PCT is expecting its budget to break even this year but there is little scope for service development. Some grant-funded initiatives are insecure and some workstreams have been delayed. Against this background, partners have supported some good and very good achievement in outcomes for children, for example, school attainment.

41. Performance management of services to children and young people is adequate overall. Arrangements to review the CYPP and to measure progress are not yet fully in place. Work is underway to agree a format for the reporting of performance and financial data to the Children's Trust. Activity and outcome data are used routinely to inform managers, but this is discrete to individual services rather than assigned across them. Quality audits of social care services are an effective development. However, most health plans are not sufficiently robust and the performance management of key action plans in health is poor. Significant service failures in the youth service and the YOT, including failure to deliver statutory responsibilities in the latter, have resulted in the firming up of management arrangements, including contract and performance monitoring.

42. There are some good examples of effective practice in the involvement of children, young people and their parents/carers in service feedback and service development, but good work on the ground lacks strategic coordination. This is being addressed well.

Grades

Grades awarded:

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

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

Recommendations

For immediate action

- Implement secure vetting procedures for all who work with children and young people.
- Develop a risk-assessed project plan for integrated adolescent services that:

- addresses the very serious weaknesses in the youth offending service, including safeguarding issues
- prioritises the setting up of a Youth Inclusion Support Panel
- ensures sustained progress in addressing weaknesses in the youth service
- ensures targeted support to young people at risk of family breakdown
- ensures sufficient capacity to improve long-term provision for adolescents most at risk
- improves transition planning for young people with LDD and pathway planning for young people who are looked after.

For action over the next six months

- Agree a framework for the performance management of the Children's Trust partnership, including for the comprehensive reporting of key activities and outcomes to track the implementation of the CYPP.
- Audit and improve partnership working to address child health inequalities, ensuring that GPs can fully contribute to achieving the Every Child Matters outcomes.
- Secure improved uptake of immunisation.
- Undertake a strategic review of preventative services and agree a joint commissioning strategy that identifies:
 - strategic priorities for integrated services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
 - a joint placement strategy for children and young people who are looked after
 - improved support for young carers.
- Develop more locally available and affordable childcare provision.
- Improve access to community leisure and recreation facilities, including for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

For action in the longer term

- Increase the availability of suitable and affordable housing for vulnerable groups.

Main Report

Outcomes for children and young people

43. Outcomes for most children and young people in Bromley are generally good, but there are inadequacies for some vulnerable groups and in more deprived areas.

44. Children and young people in Bromley are generally healthy. National indicators show good health outcomes for most, although less so for vulnerable children. Few mothers smoke in pregnancy and the number who start breastfeeding is high. The percentage of low birth weight babies is in line with the national average but has risen slightly over the past year and is higher in more deprived areas. Infant mortality and rates of childhood illness are low. The level of dental decay for five year olds meets the national oral health target. Immunisation rates for children aged between two and five are significantly below comparator rates. The overall teenage conception rate is decreasing, after several years of an upward trend, and is now just below the national average. However, there is a concerning increase in the incidence of teenage pregnancies amongst looked after young women and care leavers. A high percentage of Bromley schools participate in the Healthy Schools programme and School Sports partnership. In comparison to national rates, childhood obesity in Bromley is low overall but higher in some schools and deprived areas. It is too early to judge the impact of action to address this. CAMHS provision is now satisfactory and improving. Good progress is being made towards the provision of a comprehensive service. Looked after children's health needs are met well and are improving. The annual target for completed health assessments is well within reach. Overall, the health needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are adequately addressed, but this is not consistent for all age groups. Health outcomes for young people referred through the YOT are inadequate.

45. Children and young people are generally safe. The majority of children surveyed feel very safe or quite safe in school and in their local community. The numbers of children and young people killed or seriously injured in road accidents are falling in line with the national picture. The implementation of multi-agency policies and procedures safeguard children appropriately. Fewer children are referred to social care services than in similar authorities. Timescales for the completion of initial and core assessments are very good. All children on the child protection register are allocated to a qualified social worker and cases are reviewed on time. There are fewer looked after children and young people in Bromley than in similar authorities. Despite recent increases in the number of local placements, too many children, around half, are placed outside of the borough. 90% of looked after children are allocated to a qualified social worker, which is adequate. Short-term placement stability for looked after children is very good and few have more than three placements in a year. Long-term placement stability is just adequate, and improving, and current projections are sustainable. There is insufficient

placement choice for some groups of young people. The number of children adopted from care is lower than in similar authorities. Satisfactory arrangements protect children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from abuse or neglect, but too few receive consistent support from an allocated worker.

46. Most children and young people enjoy school and achieve well.

Standards achieved in schools are very good and are above those nationally, with some outstanding attainment. In 2006, standards improved further at Key Stages 2 and 3 and for young people achieving five or more good GCSE passes. Some volatility, however, means that standards in a few primary schools are not consistently meeting minimum expected levels. The attainment of Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups is above that nationally. Looked after children achieve below most other groups; their achievements at GCSE have shown some improvement, but a very low percentage leave care with a good qualification. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities mostly make good progress. The leadership and management of schools are mostly good. No school is currently subject to an Ofsted category of concern. Attendance at school continues to be a major weakness, with levels of authorised absence especially high. The authority has taken steps to tackle this issue more robustly. Permanent exclusions have reduced from the high levels of 2004, and are now broadly in line with those nationally. Opportunities to learn and achieve in provision offered by the youth service are insufficiently challenging and do not contribute to the overall achievement of young people in the borough. The impact of leisure and recreation facilities is limited by access and affordability, particularly for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

47. Some children and young people have a suitable range of opportunities to make decisions and take personal responsibility.

Some make a good contribution to their communities through the Youth Opportunity Panels. Children and young people's social and emotional development is supported well. The Bromley Youth Council provides some young people with good opportunities to develop new skills and contribute to the design of some services. Children and young people have been involved in a number of key council appointments such as the Director of Children Services. Provision of services for vulnerable children and young people vary. Many parents who attend educational programmes through the Bromley Children Project report positive improvements in their children's attitude towards school. Some good programmes support those from BME backgrounds. Some vulnerable groups, such as young carers, do not have adequate support to help them lead full and active lives, for example, many are unable to access after school activities because of caring responsibilities. There are too few opportunities for young people who offend to participate in diversionary activities and too little attention to restorative justice. Recent improvements in the youth service have had some success in engaging young people who offend from hard to reach communities in particular. Good multi-agency work through the extended services programme has resulted in a reduction of reported crime

locally. The involvement of looked after children and young people in their reviews is satisfactory. Strengthening independent advocacy for children and young people who are looked after or with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is recognised by the authority as a priority.

48. Most young people are able to achieve economic well-being and are prepared well for working life. Outcomes are good for the majority but there are weaknesses for some vulnerable groups. Levels of post-16 participation in education are high and improving. Over 80% of young people continue in education after the age of 16. Figures for those who are NEET are among the lowest in the London South learning and skills area. Participation rates in work-based learning are satisfactory. The participation rates of 17 year olds are below government targets but improving. Participation by teenage mothers and young people who offend remain low. More than 70% of young people achieve a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19, and more than half progress to higher education. A-level success rates are about the national average, but below those of similar authorities. Apprenticeship success rates have been low but have improved to about the national average in 2006. Less than half of young people completing E2E programmes achieve successful outcomes. Achievement levels by teenage mothers, young people who offend and care leavers are low, but show signs of improvement. Bromley has a small quantity of local authority housing and one third is below the decent housing standard. Schemes to provide semi-independent and temporary accommodation for young mothers and vulnerable groups are insufficient to meet need. The time spent in bed and breakfast accommodation is reducing, but the time spent in hostels is far too long. Increasing numbers of care leavers live in suitable accommodation, but too many have insufficient access to permanent accommodation after the age of 18. Planning to support young people's transition to adult services is unsatisfactory for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pathway planning for care leavers is poor.

The impact of local services

Being healthy

49. The work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is adequate. There are some good features. Some good integrated provision is improving outcomes for most children and young people, although not all services work together effectively to address child health inequalities. The PCT has undertaken some very good work to redesign specialist children's health services and is taking the lead to engage other agencies in improving the health of vulnerable groups. However, there are gaps in service provision and access.

50. Most parents and carers receive good support to keep their children healthy. Maternity and ante-natal services are good. Few mothers smoke in pregnancy and the number who start breastfeeding is high. The percentage of

low birth weight babies is in line with the national average, but has risen slightly over the past year and is higher in more deprived areas.

51. Health visiting and school nursing services are good and work well with partner agencies, including voluntary sector organisations. There is good provision of targeted health education and support for vulnerable parents, such as that delivered through Community Vision and the well established Bromley Children Project. Locally trained interpreters support parents and carers from BME communities to access health services.

52. Most children and young people receive good support to keep healthy, although support for more vulnerable children is only adequate. A high percentage of Bromley schools participate in the Healthy Schools programme and a range of well-designed healthy eating projects and school sports provision is working well to improve children's diet and exercise. Rates of childhood obesity are low overall, but are higher in some schools and deprived areas in the borough. It is too early to judge the impact of action to address this.

53. A good teenage pregnancy strategy and effective partnership working is now contributing to reducing overall teenage pregnancy rates. Good use is made of commissioned needs analysis to provide targeted services to more vulnerable groups, such as young people not attending school, schools where conceptions are highest, and in other key hotspots. Additional sex and relationship education enrichment days in schools, increased provision of young people's sexual health clinics and extensive free condom distribution through accredited venues are helping to reduce rates of sexually transmitted infections. A review is underway to address a concerning increase in the incidence of teenage conceptions for looked after young women and care leavers. Healthy lifestyles are not promoted for young people referred through the YOT. Access to substance misuse services for young people is adequate, although provision is not well coordinated.

54. Most children and young people's physical health is good and they receive timely and appropriate access to health services when they are ill. Those from deprived areas in the borough have worse levels of health than the rest of the child population. Needs analysis and strategic planning are not yet effective in identifying and addressing health inequalities in pockets of deprivation across the borough.

55. Despite good effort, immunisation rates for children aged between two and five years are significantly below comparator rates. Improving uptake of immunisation remains a challenge for the area and action is not yet sufficiently well targeted to prevent outbreaks of infectious diseases such as mumps, measles or rubella. Although the number of GPs providing child health surveillance is in line with the national average,, not all are able to contribute fully to the Every Child Matters outcomes because of limitations on space and capacity.

56. Waiting times for specialist child health services are satisfactory overall but the authority recognises that too many inappropriate referrals are being made to specialist services. A good service redesign of speech and language therapy has led to reduced waiting times and improved access, particularly for younger children, although it is acknowledged that there is insufficient provision for children with communication difficulties in mainstream schools.

57. Children and young people with mental health problems receive adequate and improving multi-agency services. Good progress is being made towards comprehensive CAMHS provision. Vulnerable children's panels are improving inter-agency communication and joint working with CAMHS, and statutory and voluntary agencies work well together at CAMHS Tier 2, with Bromley Y, for example, providing an excellent service. Children's Fund workers, together with three part-time health visitors, provide good outreach services to parents with young children. Waiting times for assessment at CAMHS Tier 2 and 3 have reduced but there are still long waits for some therapies. Mental health services for looked after children and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are adequate. Support to staff working with children is satisfactory but limited in scope.

58. Overall, the health needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are adequately addressed. Significant gaps in provision for school-aged children and young people are being tackled. The Phoenix Early Support programme delivers an exemplary model of integrated assessment and post-diagnosis support for pre-school children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and complex needs. This is highly rated by parents. Good nursing support and training for education staff are enabling the successful inclusion of more children and young people with complex health needs in mainstream schools and other settings. Transition to adult health services for most young people is not yet adequate, particularly for those with both learning difficulties and mental health problems. This is being addressed. CAMHS behaviour management and education behaviour support services are not well coordinated. Families and carers of school aged children with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism and emotional and behavioural difficulties do not receive adequate support. Plans are in place to roll out appropriate training on ADHD across the borough.

59. Looked after children's health needs are met well and improving. The annual target for completed health assessments is achievable. The work of the designated doctor and nurse for looked after children is particularly good.

Staying safe

60. **The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is adequate.** There are some good features. Nevertheless, there are significant weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements within the youth offending service.

61. Parents and children receive good information on key risks to safety and how to deal with them, including effective road safety initiatives. Some effective action addresses aspects of community safety, but insufficient strategic attention is given to addressing fear of crime. Although the majority of children and young people feel safe, some report feeling unsafe in some parts of the borough and identify a need for more protection from gangs and bullies.

62. Strong leadership and effective partnership working has ensured the LSCB has been established on a sound footing and is able to effectively challenge partner agencies. Multi-agency audit arrangements are good, but consistent monitoring of outcomes across all partners is not yet established. Pan-London Child Protection procedures have been adopted and are appropriately supplemented by local procedures. Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements are sound and strategic connection with the LSCB is developing. Secure arrangements identify missing children and those not in education. Multi-agency child protection training is good, although engagement by some professional groups, for example GPs, is not yet adequate.

63. Staff vetting procedures are secure for the recruitment and selection processes conducted formally by Bromley. For staff arriving through other routes including, for example, agency staff and volunteers, the authority does not require checks to be confirmed and verified. The LSCB has rightly identified a need to ensure systems within and across agencies are consistent. Strategies to identify children affected by domestic violence are broadly satisfactory and some good services support women who are subject to domestic abuse. In 2007, changes within the Metropolitan Police will require greater involvement of the borough police in safeguarding work locally. Secure arrangements for this change are not yet in place, particularly in relation to the identification of children at risk from domestic abuse. Arrangements within individual agencies to secure consent to share information are adequate and joint arrangements for information sharing are underway as part of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) pilot.

64. The effectiveness of action to address bullying in schools varies. Although there is some good coordinated action to promote anti-bullying, work to develop a comprehensive, multi-agency and borough-wide strategy, and the dissemination of good practice, is at an early stage. The authority recognises the need to raise awareness of racist behaviour and to address the relatively low rate of reporting of racist incidents in schools.

65. There has been good and sustained improvement in practice and operational management of children's social care services since 2003, when services were judged poor. Systems and practice in the Referral and Assessment Teams are mainly good. Where there are weaknesses, appropriate action is being taken to address these. Thresholds for intervention are applied consistently within these teams. However, thresholds are not well understood within partner agencies. Communication and joint working with schools has improved, although independent schools do not always make timely referrals of

children at risk. Partner agencies report positively on the child protection advice they receive from social work teams. Timescales for completion of assessments are very good, but assessments are of variable quality with insufficient attention to analysis in some. Most cases are subject to good management oversight within social care teams, although the quality of chronologies and recording of supervision decisions on files is not consistent. In some cases, action to address safeguarding concerns is poor. Internal practice audits within social care services are a strength and these have contributed to service improvement. Central data management systems do not currently provide adequate management information, which limits effective overview of performance. The new Care First system will take some time to be fully operational.

66. Some good services support children in need, particularly younger children, and prevent children becoming looked after. These include the Family Focus Team, although its work is not always well targeted. There has been recent expansion in the capacity of the Children in Need Teams and service users value the parenting support they receive. However, teams have a wide remit and capacity is stretched. The system of transferring most cases at the point of deregistration has led to support being withdrawn too rapidly for some families. There are some examples of family group conferences being used effectively, but their use is insufficiently well embedded in the practice of the department and there has been little analysis of their longer term effectiveness. Where children and young people are receiving a number of services from different agencies, the coordination of case planning is variable and sometimes poor, with duplication of effort and insufficient evaluation of the effectiveness of services. Multi-agency panel arrangements, for example vulnerable children's panels, are starting to improve care pathways for referrals from some services. However, there is duplication, a lack of clarity over focus and accountability, and little engagement of parents.

67. Support for adolescents is not well coordinated. A new service is planned to address some of these weaknesses. However, the authority faces a very considerable challenge, with teams already stretched, to ensure this development can happen alongside the urgent action that is needed to address the very serious weaknesses in the youth offending service.

68. Care planning for looked after children is generally satisfactory and well managed. Caseload sizes within the Looked After Children's Team are well controlled. High levels of staff turnover result in too many changes in allocated social workers. One-third of looked after children and young people are from BME groups, but recognition of this has been slow. Much progress has been made in extending the range of in-house fostering placement choice, especially in the recruitment of carers from BME communities, but there are particular gaps in placements for challenging adolescents and children and young people with complex needs, and no coherent placement strategy.

69. Care leavers are adequately supported by the Leaving Care Team, which includes staff from the Connexions service. Approximately one third of all cases held by the team are unaccompanied asylum seekers. Those aged 16 and 17 are usually supported as looked after children, which is good practice, but most of those who are not looked after only receive support on demand from the duty worker.

70. Overall, there is a lack of strategic clarity and operational planning of services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Disabled Children Social Work Team has insufficient capacity to meet need. It is only able to allocate 28% of known cases and manages a range of competing demands which causes inconsistency and user dissatisfaction. Some recent progress has increased capacity in residential short-breaks provision, although this is insufficient in family link foster care, the outreach service, flexible day care provision and direct payments. Joint health and social care eligibility criteria support equitable access to short-break care through the Disability Resource Panel, but this has not been publicised to all parents and carers using short-break resources. There is limited social care support for children and young people with mild to moderate learning difficulties and challenging behaviour, which places additional pressure on already stretched Children in Need Teams. Patchy coordination and signposting of information to parents of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, especially on eligibility and entitlements, results in considerable dissatisfaction.

Enjoying and achieving

71. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is good.** Actions taken to help schools achieve and maintain high standards are very good and the authority is firmly focused on reducing disparity in performance. Improved school place planning maintains accessibility in local communities and the opening of a new secondary school has addressed the need for additional provision. Schools are effectively challenged and support is well targeted and monitored. Advisers know their schools well. Good priority is given to promoting strong leadership and enabling schools to evaluate their own progress. Intervention is based on a sound analysis of need, and good practice is disseminated effectively, including through the use of successful headteachers as consultants. Support for children with English as an additional language is mostly good. In the Crays area, traveller children are very well supported, with demonstrable improvement in their attendance and attainment. Support for gifted and talented children has been particularly effective. The new attendance strategy is based on much sharper analysis and smarter working by the various support agencies. The authority has taken steps to tackle authorised term-time absence more robustly.

72. Standards in early years education and care are good and the majority of children are well prepared for school. A relative weakness identified in the speaking and listening of some children is being addressed. Most early learning

provision is good or better and all settings are encouraged to seek quality recognition. The authority has developed strong partnerships with the mostly private, voluntary and independent providers, in collaboration with the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. Good well-targeted support has been particularly effective in improving assessment.

73. Support to help looked after children enjoy and achieve is now better focused on achievement and is satisfactory. Achievements at GCSE have improved, but remain lower than for other pupils and below national and outer London averages for this group. The integration of the Looked After Children Education Team within the Main Support Team, and the supply of computers to all 13 to 14 year old looked after children to assist their studies, are positive developments. All looked after children have personal education plans and procedures to support these are in place. The Looked After Children Education Team ensures that the needs of children placed in schools outside the borough are addressed, and monitoring of their attainment and progress is good.

74. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make mostly good progress. Substantial reconfiguration of specialist SEN provision to reduce reliance on independent/non-maintained settings outside the authority, although slow to come about, is progressing well. It has been well supported by some good training, although there is still further work to do to improve the skills of staff in supporting young people with complex behaviour patterns. The learning support service provides good support for secondary schools and the monitoring of progress made by all young people with learning difficulties is thorough. Although reducing levels of SEN statements are too high. Some parents report insufficient support and unnecessary adversarial engagement with the authority through the statementing process. There is a good focus on inclusion in early years settings and excellent multi-agency support for young children with complex needs. A single referral route and the co-location of services are important features of this provision. Educational support for young people with sensory impairment is good. The accommodation that houses specialist provision for children and young people with hearing impairment is unfit for purpose and the authority has identified funding for suitable replacement.

75. The Pupil Referral service has been relaunched in new, fit-for-purpose accommodation. Progress has been made in reducing exclusions and the number of fixed-term exclusions has dramatically reduced, notably in schools supported by the Behaviour Improvement Programme. However, young people from Black African groups are still over-represented in exclusions and in the pupil referral units, with insufficient analysis of the reasons for this. A 'hard to place' protocol has been implemented to reduce the time taken to place vulnerable children, but its impact so far has been limited. The agreement among Bromley learning alliance schools not to exclude young people for fixed periods appears to be working well, with key workers playing an important preventative role. The Key Stage 4 alternative programme provides a good range of learning and accreditation opportunities. The need for better support

for girls with emotional and behavioural difficulties has been identified and corrective action is at an early stage. Attendance at a project for pregnant young women still in education is satisfactory and attainment levels are good. Young people who are out of school because of medical needs are well served.

76. The range of leisure and recreation activities available to young people varies, as does the impact. The perceived high cost of some facilities is a barrier to participation, and the Children's Trust together with Bromley My Time, the provider of leisure services, is reviewing subsidised access for more vulnerable groups for April 2007. Some young people, particularly from vulnerable groups in deprived neighbourhoods, are not sufficiently aware of the range of leisure and recreational services that are available to them. Facilities and cultural activities are not easily accessible to children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are good opportunities for enrichment within and outside schools. The library and museum service is well used, although material for young people whose first language is not English is limited. A dance youth group is effective in developing the skills and confidence of young people with disabilities. Activities organised by BME groups are very effective in supporting young people in communities. The Youth Music Trust provides very good tuition, although it is not consistently reaching diverse groups.

77. Most families are well informed about educational matters and the children's information service is well used. Out of school hours care provision is very good in parts of the borough where this is available. Acorn groups provide very good support for vulnerable mothers of young children. The Pre-School Learning Alliance also provides parents with useful workshops on early years matters.

Making a positive contribution

78. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is adequate.** There are some good features. However, there are weaknesses in the Youth Offending Team services. Consultation and involvement in decision making lacks strategic coordination and participation is not sufficiently widespread; this is being addressed well through good planning and new appointments.

79. A range of good programmes and activities support emotional and social development well. Supplementary schools help raise the self-esteem and achievement levels of young people from BME groups. Connexions personal advisers and outreach workers offer successful, universal and targeted provision that enables young people to overcome personal barriers to learning. Well equipped Streetwise youth clubs offer good opportunities for young people to socialise and engage in community projects.

80. Vulnerable children and young people benefit significantly from the Bromley Children Project and targeted projects from the Children's Fund. Vulnerable children are supported well in transferring to school. Parents

engaged in family learning and parenting programmes articulate positive benefits for themselves and their children. Many report that improvements in their key skills help them to support their children's learning and that parenting skills gained have improved their children's behaviour. Some programmes support children and young people from BME groups well; for example, the Girls' Friendly Society offers good advice and support to pregnant and young mothers. Support for some vulnerable groups, such as young carers and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual young people, is limited in its impact. The continuation of funding for some programmes is not secure.

81. There is a clear commitment from the Children and Young People Trust to listen to and act on the views of children and young people. The Bromley Youth Council and the youth opportunity panels provide good forums for contributions to service design and the development of initiatives in neighbourhoods. However, good work on the ground lacks strategic coordination and there are insufficient opportunities for all children and young people to express their views. The authority is aware of the need for further development and good action is being taken to engage young people in consultation and participation through comprehensive plans and new appointments. Children and young people's involvement in recruitment to key council posts and representation on the policy, development and scrutiny committee are examples of good work being done by the council.

82. Some good programmes successfully reduce anti-social behaviour across the borough and in identified localities. The Positive Activities for Young People programme plays a key role in this. The Moving On project offers good support to young people transferring from primary to secondary education. This programme specifically targets those who are identified as at risk of offending. Plans to establish a YISP in September 2006 have been significantly delayed. This has reduced the authority's capacity to intervene where children and young people are most at risk of offending.

83. A good range of measures improves community safety for children and young people in Bromley, including a designated police-schools liaison officer in all secondary schools, school travel plans and the implementation of Safer Neighbourhood. Comprehensive plans to coordinate the police agenda for children and young people in the borough include the appointment of a youth affairs police inspector. Nevertheless, the Bromley Youth Offending Team is failing to deliver on its statutory requirements to a satisfactory level. Moreover, although the Youth Service has made good progress overall since June 2005, progress has been less strong in terms of impact on improving attendance and achievement.

84. There are too few opportunities for young people who offend to participate in diversionary activities and too little attention to restorative justice. However, the Priory School offers an excellent model of multi-agency work in developing diversionary activities for young people in the Ramsden Area through the extended services programme. Recent improvements in the youth

service have resulted in some success in engaging young people from hard to reach groups to discourage re-offending.

85. The independent advocacy service for children who are looked after is adequate. It is acknowledged that further development is needed, including for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

86. Children and young people using the Hollybank short-break care unit express satisfaction with the service and identify good and improved provision. However, some parents and carers have expressed strong concerns about the development of the service. The range of non-residential short-break resources is limited.

87. Looked after children and young people's involvement in their reviews is satisfactory, but not all feel involved in their care plans.

Achieving economic well-being

88. The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is adequate and improving.

Outcomes are good for the majority but there are weaknesses for some vulnerable groups. The children's information service works closely with partners to guide parents and carers to available childcare and sources of financial assistance. The authority recognises a serious shortage of affordable childcare and is targeting its resources to more deprived parts of the borough through the location of children's centres. There is an increased take up of tax credits and of educational maintenance allowances by young people. Family learning courses have successfully trained some local parents for employment.

89. Most young people are well prepared for working life. There are high and improving levels of post-16 participation in education but there is considerable variation in success rates in both schools and colleges. Success rates for young people in work-based learning and on E2E programmes are improving but are still low. Measures to reduce the numbers of those who are NEET are successful, and rates are comparatively low and declining. The participation rates of 17 year olds are below government targets but improving. Participation and achievement levels by teenage mothers and young people who offend remain low.

90. Good careers education and guidance contributes to high rates of progression to higher education. However, some young people, particularly from vulnerable groups in deprived neighbourhoods, are not sufficiently aware of the range of education services that are available to them. The single directory of post-16 provision assists in making choices, but despite good efforts by the authority, there is insufficient information on vocational and work-based options for some students in a few schools. Overall, pupils at Key Stage 4 have opportunities for a wide range of vocational studies and work experience, the majority leading to accredited qualifications. Bromley College has successfully realigned its curriculum to give it a much sharper vocational

focus. Plans are well in hand for the development of a coherent workplace strategy through the Education Business Partnership. Most young people, through good support, become confident, enterprising and financially literate.

91. Good collaborative planning has resulted in significant improvements in the quality and co-ordination of 14-19 provision. Good progress has been made in increasing the range of vocational options and opportunities for pupils to progress to higher levels in subjects of their choice. The commitment to a clear strategy by schools, colleges and training providers has led to examples of better planning for curriculum choices between neighbouring schools. The overall quality of provision in colleges is satisfactory, while for 16-19 year olds in schools it is mostly good. Satisfactory use is made of data to map the curriculum and to monitor achievement. This has resulted in much fuller awareness by providers of the pattern of educational provision in Bromley and of how well students are performing. However, information on the participation, success and destinations of young people from specific vulnerable groups is insufficiently detailed. Colleges and schools have extended their provision to fill gaps identified through the local authority's curriculum audit. There is an improved range of Level 2 post-16 specialist options in schools, and Level 1 provision is located mainly in colleges. The colleges have worked well with schools on the development of vocational 'tasters' for Year 9 and 10 pupils. There are appropriate plans to introduce specialist diplomas in 2008. Employer influence on the planning of educational provision is improving. Not enough provision is accessible to young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, teenage mothers and young people who offend. Arrangements to monitor the quality of 16-19 provision are effective and this has contributed to steadily improving outcomes for this age group. Some young people report that the promotion of equality and good race relations is not sufficiently encouraged, particularly in relation to perceptions about travellers.

92. The authority has invested additional resources into regenerating safer communities in deprived areas and recognises further improvement is necessary. Action is most successful in Penge and the Ramsden Estate, where several voluntary and statutory agencies are involved in coordinated programmes to address a broad range of family needs, including the provision of affordable childcare and safe and accessible leisure facilities for young people. Action is less successful in areas such as St Mary's Cray, where there is no agreed, coherent, and fully understood strategy for the planned development of the area. Parents and young people report insufficient opportunity to identify local needs and influence priorities.

93. Satisfactory action ensures young people have decent housing and has reduced numbers living in poor accommodation. The council funds an independent housing advice service and a well-used law centre for young people. Schemes providing semi-independent and temporary accommodation are insufficient to meet need. The time spent by families with dependent children or by pregnant women in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation is reducing, but that spent in hostels remains well above the six-week target.

There are a number of supported living units for teenage mothers and other vulnerable groups, but the authority recognises that this is insufficient. Lone parents under 18 get satisfactory support. There is a shortage of accommodation for homeless young people. The authority has plans to provide advice on accommodation as part of the new integrated adolescent support service.

94. The number of young people leaving care and remaining in learning is improving. Provision in a successful construction training programme at Bromley Field studies centre has been designed specifically to provide six places for care leavers. The authority recognises that arrangements to support transition to further education or training for looked after children have not been effective. Some young people have poor quality pathway plans. Care leavers report inadequate assessment of their financial, personal, and social and welfare needs. There is insufficient tailored vocational provision to provide for the needs of all looked after children, but some successfully seek places outside the borough. Increasing numbers of care leavers live in suitable accommodation. However, too many vulnerable and unsettled care leavers are placed in bed and breakfast accommodation without access to permanent accommodation after the age of 18. The authority has acknowledged the need to improve educational and career planning and to develop more customised training programmes for looked after young people.

95. Participation of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in further learning is satisfactory and they receive appropriate educational advice and guidance. Bromley College offers a suitable range of discrete provision for learners with learning difficulties. A few vocational areas are not accessible to learners with physical disabilities. Satisfactory arrangements provide suitable work placements, such as the Mencap Jobmatch scheme. The authority acknowledges a need to further develop relationships with employers and to extend work placement opportunities. Transition planning is unsatisfactory despite a recent strategic focus and additional resources. The level of direct payments to young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with that of other authorities. Some parents report difficulty in obtaining occupational therapy assessment for adaptations to their homes.

Service management

96. **The management of services for children and young people is adequate.** Ambitions for the area are good overall and the CYPP includes some challenging targets. The needs assessment underpinning the plan is adequate. Some local data is presented numerically in the CYPP with inadequate analysis, for example, the relatively high numbers of young people excluded from schools and absence data. This level of detail is supplied in the underlying plans. Other information, such as the number of children with mental health problems, has been mainly extrapolated from national figures. This makes for some difficulty in assessing the extent of need. Work is underway to provide a more detailed picture of specific populations and local neighbourhoods. While

the CYPP covers the period 2006/09, priorities for action and specific targets are for 2006/07 only. Many of the priorities lack a focus on outcomes, making it difficult to measure and evaluate progress.

97. The engagement of children and young people and parents/carers in the production of the CYPP was adequate. Agreed priorities are adequately based on identified need but there is insufficient prioritisation of some vulnerable groups, such as school-aged children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, young carers and young people who offend. Insufficient consideration has been given to diversity, including the celebration of cultural diversity, and to ensuring that the needs of vulnerable groups are met.

98. Partnership arrangements are adequate. Resources to deliver the CYPP for 2006/07 have been identified in respect of budgets controlled by the council, schools' budgets and some PCT budgets. Work is underway in the PCT to identify commissioning budgets in respect of children and young people. While the key contributions of partners to activities are set out in some instances, lead responsibilities are seldom specified and it is unclear what the contribution of all partners will be and how the plan will be afforded. The presentation of the plan does not identify readily the full engagement of partners.

99. There are some very good examples of inter-agency working to support children and young people with significant needs. While there is also some innovative and high quality preventative provision, this is currently fragmented. There has been no overarching strategic review to identify the existing interventions which offer best value for money and user satisfaction. It is unclear how mainstream and statutory services, such as those provided through children's social care, educational psychology and CAMHS, are to be integrated with preventative services in local areas. Strategic planning and coordination for the development of services to some groups is at a very early stage, for example, those for disabled children. Duplication of effort is apparent in some areas of activity as is insufficient capacity to support older children and young people in need. Some services do not address inclusion and diversity sufficiently well. The integrated strategy, which brings together the Bromley Children Project with government strategies including extended services in schools and children's centres, is work in progress.

100. Information sharing is adequate overall. Information about individual children and young people is recorded separately according to the agency involved, with some electronic information accessible across agencies. Information sharing protocols are under development and a CAF pilot has started in one area. Information systems in social care are currently inadequate and the commissioning of the new Care First system has been well managed.

101. Capacity to deliver priorities is adequate. The quality of officers is good but capacity is stretched in some areas of activity. Some changes, including initiating the SEN review, implementing the Disability Access strategy, tackling attendance in schools and establishing the YISP, have been slow to come

about. Corporate parenting responsibilities are at a relatively early stage. The Children's Trust has been established from existing children's partnership arrangements, with an inclusive range of board members and clear governance arrangements. The Trust has met twice and has yet to develop its performance management function. The Lead Member for children and young people has extensive experience and a good grasp of the children's services agenda. The recent appointment of a permanent Director of Children's Services ends a period of uncertainty. The council's education and social care functions have been integrated at senior management level, with joint working enhanced by strategic contributions from the PCT.

102. Relatively low grants from government and low council tax necessitate a background of financial stringency. Some funding has been particularly limited over time, for example, spending on the youth service. There is a significant backlog of planned maintenance in schools. Following consultation with schools, an increasing contribution from the Dedicated Schools Grant is funding improvements. The authority has itself identified the accommodation that houses specialist provision for children and young people with hearing impairment as unfit for purpose, so disadvantaging highly vulnerable pupils. The authority has identified funding for a suitable replacement. The PCT is expecting its budget to break even this year but there is little scope for service development. Some grant-funded initiatives are insecure, for example, the Young Carers project, and some work streams have been delayed, for example, children's centres. Against this background, partners have supported some good and very good achievement in outcomes for children, for example school attainment.

103. The council provides good value for money in its services for children, and budget management is effective. Appropriate action has been taken to contain overspending on demand-led budgets, such as out of authority placements for children with SEN and for looked after children. However, spending in these areas remains high and 'invest to save' strategies have yet to impact fully. School balances are well monitored and effective action has been taken to reduce high surpluses. Stronger measures to combat fraud in schools have been introduced by financial services and internal audit in response to local incidents.

104. The council and its partners are in discussion with the Government about a Local Area Agreement to be implemented in 2007/08. This is expected to facilitate greater alignment and pooling of budgets. Currently, children's budgets within the council are beginning to align but there is no joint commissioning strategy and little coordinated commissioning across the sector, although procurement for children with SEN and for looked after children have been aligned. A section 31 agreement for respite provision has been negotiated with the Bromley PCT, despite a moratorium on expenditure. There is no coherent placement strategy for looked after children. However, there is some good joint commissioning of alternative education within the 14-19 strategy and the CAMHS Strategy Group is developing a sound approach. In some instances,

good use is being made of effective voluntary sector services, for example, the Tier 2 CAMHS service provided by Bromley Y.

105. Workforce development is at a relatively early stage. The cultural change programme is well focused on multi-agency working. The recruitment of teachers and social workers has improved but the retention of social workers remains an issue.

106. Across the council, performance management structures are clear. Regular reports on key performance information and financial monitoring are provided to chief officers, to Cabinet and to the Children and Young People's Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee. Performance management of services to children and young people is adequate overall. Activity and outcome data are used routinely to inform managers, but this is generally discrete to service areas, for example social care and education, and it does not cover inter-agency work. Work is underway to agree a format for the reporting of performance and financial data to the Children's Trust.

107. Arrangements to review the CYPP and to measure progress are in line with government guidance. Individual performance is well managed. It is too early to judge the impact of performance centres on improvement, but these are based on historic groupings rather than on the developing arrangements in localities. There are good examples of improvement and efficiency plans, but some are weak. Most health plans are not sufficiently robust and the performance management of key action plans in health is poor. Recent learning about good practice in information management in aspects of children's services is being applied across services. Quality assurance audits of social care services are an effective development. Significant service failures in the youth service and the YOT, including a failure to deliver statutory responsibilities in the latter, have resulted in the firming up of management arrangements, including contract and performance monitoring.

108. There are some good examples of effective practice in the involvement of children, young people and their parents/carers in service feedback and service development. However, good work on the ground lacks strategic coordination and insufficient opportunities for all children and young people to participate. This is being addressed well.

109. The self assessment identifies many of the strengths in service provision, but it does not sufficiently address current weaknesses or key areas for development. Given the track record of service improvement, including for some vulnerable groups, together with strong leadership and commitment by key elected members and clear leadership and management in key areas from good quality officers, albeit with gaps at senior levels, there is adequate capacity to improve further.

Annex: The children and young people's section of the corporate assessment report

1. The council and its partners achieve generally good outcomes for children and young people and the impact of local services is adequate overall, with good features in all outcome areas. Services provide clear benefits to many children and young people, for example, the Bromley Children Project, but significant weaknesses remain in provision and outcomes for vulnerable groups and in more deprived areas. Overall, education services are good and those for social care are adequate, as is the health service for children. Capacity to deliver priorities is adequate, albeit stretched in some areas. The capacity to improve further is also adequate, not least through the commitment of key elected members and senior officers.
2. The management of services for children and young people is adequate. The CYPP provides an early agenda for strategic development and priorities for the Children's Trust are emerging. Ambitions for the area are good overall. The needs assessment underpinning the plan is adequate but there is insufficient prioritisation of some vulnerable groups. Many of the priorities lack a focus on outcomes, making it difficult to measure and evaluate progress. It is unclear what the contribution of all partners will be and how the plan will be afforded.
3. The Children's Trust has clear governance arrangements but has yet to develop its performance management function. Arrangements to review the CYPP and to measure progress are in line with government guidance. Some plans for improvement are good, but others are weak. Most health plans are not sufficiently robust. There has been no overarching strategic review of service provision and duplication is apparent in some areas.
4. Children and young people are generally healthy. National indicators show good health outcomes, although less so for some vulnerable groups and in deprived areas. There is some good integrated provision, although not all services work together effectively to address child health inequalities. Children and young people are generally safe but there are significant weaknesses in safeguarding arrangements within the youth offending service. Most children and young people enjoy school and achieve well. Improved school place planning maintains accessibility in local communities the opening of a new secondary school has addressed the need for additional provision. Standards are above those nationally, with some outstanding attainment. Standards in early years education and care are good and most early learning provision is good or better. The impact of community leisure and recreation facilities is limited by access and affordability, particularly for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
5. There are some good examples of the involvement of children, young people and their parents/carers in service feedback and service development, but this lacks strategic coordination. Most young people are able to achieve

economic well-being and are prepared well for working life. Outcomes are good for the majority, but there are considerable weaknesses for some vulnerable groups. Very few young people are NEET after the age of 16 and the number progressing to higher education is high. Providers have worked together well to increase the range of vocational and progression opportunities for young people aged 14-16.