

Joint area review

East Sussex Children's Services Authority Area

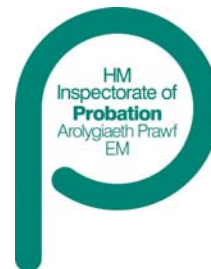
Review of services for children and young people

Audit Commission
Healthcare Commission
HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
HM Inspectorate of Prisons
HM Inspectorate of Probation
Ofsted

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Introduction

1. The most recent annual performance assessment for East Sussex judged the council's children's services as good and its capacity to improve as outstanding.
2. This report assesses the contribution of local services in ensuring the following for children and young people:
 - effective care for those at risk or requiring safeguarding
 - the best possible outcomes for those who are looked after
 - the best possible outcomes for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
3. The following investigations were also carried out:
 - the quality of service provided for and the outcomes achieved by children and young people using child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)
 - the impact of 14–19 strategy, particularly on vulnerable young people and those in the most deprived areas.

Context

4. East Sussex covers 700 square miles. The population is just over 500,000 people, of whom some 125,000 are aged under 20. More than 80% of the county is rural in character and is mostly designated as areas of outstanding natural beauty. The main centres of population and employment are concentrated in the southern coastal strip and west of the county in Hastings and St Leonards, Eastbourne, Bexhill, Newhaven, Seaford and Lewes. The majority of the population is White British with only 2.3% of Black and minority ethnic heritage at the last census. The proportion of Black and minority ethnic heritage children in schools is currently 6.8% with few living outside the coastal towns. There is a small traditional Traveller community and in the last two years an increasing number of families from Eastern Europe have moved to the area.
5. The council is the county's major employer. There is seasonal work in hospitality and tourism, mainly in the seaside towns. Agriculture is the predominant industry outside the towns and most employers have fewer than ten staff. The county has no motorways and one of the lowest proportions of dual carriageway in England, less than 20 miles in total. A minority of the population are among the most affluent in the country, many having moved into East Sussex because of the natural environment, and housing costs are high. There are some areas of significant social and economic deprivation, mainly in the larger coastal towns, and many families in the rural areas are disadvantaged through living far away from services. Overall unemployment

rates are above the regional average, although wages are below the average for the south east of England.

6. Pre-16 education provision comprises:

- 179 private or voluntary nurseries, 79 pre-school playgroups, 105 breakfast /out of school settings including 10 children's centres totalling 363 settings
- 156 first schools
- 27 secondary schools
- 11 special schools
- two pupil referral units.

7. Post-16 education and training is provided by:

- 11 schools with sixth forms
- one sixth form college
- two general further education colleges and one specialist land-based college
- three main local work-based training providers in addition to national providers.

8. Entry to Employment provision is managed by Connexions, a local consortium controlling around 75 places.

9. Adult and community learning, including family learning, is provided by East Sussex County Council and a number of voluntary organisations.

10. Primary care is provided by East Sussex Downs and Weald Primary Care Trust and Hastings and Rother Primary Care Trust.

11. Acute hospital services are mainly provided by the East Sussex Hospitals National Health Service Trust.

12. Mental health services are mainly provided by the Sussex Partnership National Health Service Trust.

13. Children's social care services are provided through: 217 foster carers; three children's residential care homes; five family centres, two of which are provided in partnership with the national charity National Children's Homes; one secure children's home; and 17 social work teams. In addition, for disabled children there are two short break homes and three social work teams and a range of family support services.

14. There are no young offender institutions in the area.

Main findings

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

- arrangements for safeguarding children and young people are good. The Local Safeguarding Children Board provides clear leadership and effective progress on its work programme with good training opportunities for all partners
- good services for looked after children are beginning to close the gap between the outcomes of most children and young people and those who are looked after, particularly in secondary education
- services to meet the specific needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good, reflecting the significant priority given to this group by the council and its partners
- the services and outcomes for children and young people using CAMHS are good with widespread access to information and community support across all agencies
- education and training outcomes for vulnerable young people are good and improving through the implementation of a comprehensive 14–19 strategy
- service management is good. Strong partnerships have focused effectively on the integration of services to secure many improving outcomes for vulnerable groups. Rapidly developing Children's Trust arrangements, effective leadership and robust financial management point to the council's excellent capacity to improve further.

Grades

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

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

Recommendations

For immediate action

The local partnership should:

- ensure that an appropriate way is found to successfully disseminate the findings of this report to children and young people in the area
- ensure that the council's staff recruitment systems and file recording consistently meet current guidance on safer recruitment.

For action over the next six months

The local partnership should:

- improve the collection and use of data to evaluate CAMHS
- ensure that there is agreed and published threshold guidance for access to targeted social care services
- further focus support on those who are not in education, employment or training in the most deprived areas.

For action in the longer term

The local partnership should:

- evaluate the review of special educational needs in terms of its impact on:
 - children and young people's achievement
 - meeting the individual needs of children and young people
 - the appropriateness of individual placements in special schools
- ensure that strategies tackle the uneven provision of leisure facilities for looked after children and care leavers
- improve the choice and distribution of accommodation for care leavers across the county
- increase provision for out-of-school and leisure activities for young people with autism and autistic spectrum disorders
- further increase employer engagement in 14–19 partnerships.

Equality and diversity

16. The focus on reducing inequalities and improving access and outcomes for diverse and vulnerable groups is a prominent feature of ambition for children and young people in East Sussex. Traditionally, diversity in the county has been viewed in terms of wealth or poverty and the rural versus town experience, with little emphasis on ethnicity. Through the notable engagement of children, young people, their families and carers in developing priorities and in reviewing performance the council and its partners are coming to a clear understanding of the rapidly changing nature of communities and their needs. Data collected from a range of partners including schools suggests that around 7% of children and young people are of Black and minority ethnic or mixed heritage and increasing rapidly. Inconsistent recording of ethnicity is being tackled, although more needs to be done to ensure that services develop further in line with current needs. Data have been used well to help improve attainment and access to education; for example, through very good tracking 100% of roadside-traveller children transferred from Year 6 to Year 7 in September 2006. Inclusive practice embedded in youth and family work improves access to services for isolated parents, carers and young people from diverse minority groups. The work of the anti-bullying team to combat racist incidents has been strengthened by partnerships with voluntary sector organisations and the allocation of a specialist mental health worker. Services for children with disabilities are well regarded by families using them. Children looked after by the council have good access to a range of services and there are signs that the aspirations of care leavers are being raised.

Safeguarding



17. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people at risk or requiring safeguarding is good.** Children and young people are provided with a safe environment. Outcomes of inspections for safety and child protection in early years settings and schools are very good. Accessible road and fire safety publicity, combined with effective multi-agency partnership attention to provision of safe environments, results in low and decreasing numbers of children under 16 killed or seriously injured. Children and young people have the opportunity to give their views on a range of safeguarding issues. Complaints are taken seriously and receive prompt responses through an effective complaints service. A comprehensive anti-bullying policy underpins a good range of initiatives to offer support to those at risk of being bullied, resulting in some increased reporting and well-regarded support to victims and to schools. Support to reduce prejudice and racism experienced by travellers is provided through an effective traveller education service.

18. There is a broad and effective range of supportive early intervention and safeguarding provision. For example, very good pre-birth assessment processes result in timely and effective early intervention. Good use is made of family group conferences to identify solutions for children at risk of coming into care. Good access to multi-agency support is enhanced through extensive voluntary sector provision for parents and young people in rural areas. User friendly web-based information provided by the council and partner agencies provides clear information to children, carers and staff.

19. Agencies and voluntary organisations work well together to reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect. A good domestic violence policy, implemented through effective operational groups, has resulted in increased reporting, prompt response and support to incidents of domestic violence where children are involved. The police refer all such cases to children's services although after assessment most do not result in child protection conferences or ongoing support to the families. The national voluntary organisation National Children's Homes publicises requirements regarding private fostering arrangements and offers some training but, despite this activity, notifications are significantly lower than expected and targets have been reviewed. Measures regarding information sharing between police and other partner agencies following from the last serious case review are in the process of being implemented.

20. There are good protocols and strong cross-agency practice to identify and track children missing from care and from education; these include effective links with neighbouring authorities. Close partnership working between police and local children's homes has resulted in a reduction of notifications of children missing from care.

21. Joint working practice and relationships between police, children's services and health services are good, particularly with the co-location of one duty team and police service within joint premises. A health visitor placed in each of the duty teams promotes good networking between the teams and health service staff. A local authority and health services web-based Children's Index is valued by staff and enables them to share key information and contacts relating to children.

22. Staff within children's services are motivated and committed, supported by regular training and development opportunities, resulting in low turnover and good continuity for service users. The current transition period in restructuring children's duty and assessment services has placed greater pressure on the teams. Random selection of case files in duty and assessment teams during this review indicated that there is good partnership working between staff, although there is inconsistency in the application of thresholds and in the quality and timeliness of file recording. Through audits of case files, senior managers have identified inconsistency in managerial oversight and have devised sound processes to tackle it.

23. Outcomes for those children and young people most at risk are good. Referrals are looked at promptly and where further assessments are necessary nearly all are carried out within the nationally agreed timescales. Child protection conferences are well structured and managed. The number of children on the child protection register is comparatively high and has increased significantly over the past year from 287 to 353, due, in part, to improved integrated working across a number of agencies and heightened awareness among partners of child protection issues. However, despite the increased numbers, good protection plans are effectively developed and implemented, records are well kept and all children on the register have a qualified social worker. Core groups meet regularly. Reviews are held on time, taking good account of the views of parents, carers and the children and young people concerned. Steps are taken to see children on their own when appropriate and most feel listened to. Effective work to assess the risks when considering taking children off the register has significantly reduced levels of re-referrals and re-registration.

24. Strong multi-agency public protection arrangements are well established. A wide range of community safety initiatives, with skilled input from voluntary organisations and the council's Youth Development Service, have effectively contributed to a reduction in anti-social behaviour, crime and substance misuse. There is good collaboration, information sharing and joint working between partner agencies to target hotspots, for example through Multi-agency Tasking Teams and Youth Intervention Groups. However, the contemporaneous inspection of the Youth Offending Service highlighted concerns about the knowledge and practice of staff in assessing the risk of vulnerability of its service users; the issue is now subject to an action plan by the Youth Offending Team and it is too early to report on progress.

25. Clear, comprehensive guidance and good training are provided to staff on safe recruitment practices, although recording practice is inconsistent. There is, however, consistently safe practice in the issuing of contracts for employment once clearances have been obtained, including within schools.

26. The Local Safeguarding Children Board is well established and well led, with good representation and high commitment from all agencies, including the voluntary sector. The Board's business plan is clear, manageable and ambitious and well linked to other strategic plans. Good quality performance information is routinely collected by the Board and its partner agencies, and used to develop safeguarding practice and services. High quality policies and procedures are effectively implemented and monitored through diverse operational sub-groups. For example, an effective audit sub-group recently undertook an audit of compliance for all members' internal child protection procedures, with each agency undertaking to update these. Good multi-agency training is developed, provided and monitored by a Local Safeguarding Children Board sub-group, which is highly valued by staff. An established sub-group appropriately oversees all serious case reviews and reports progress on action plans to the main Board.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>An effective, committed and well led Local Safeguarding Children Board.</p> <p>Safe environments for care and education with active anti-bullying work.</p> <p>Effective multi-agency public protection arrangements and community safety initiatives.</p> <p>A broad range of effective early intervention and safeguarding support services.</p> <p>Good practice in procedure and services for those most in need of protection.</p> <p>Improved focus on domestic violence with good impact on the reduction of incidence and support to children and young people affected.</p>	<p>Recruitment checks not consistently well recorded.</p> <p>The consistency of thresholds for direct referrals within the restructured children's services teams.</p>

Looked after children and young people



27. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for looked after children and young people is good.** The 2006 annual performance assessment stated that there were excellent services for looked after children and care leavers with a range of good quality residential, fostering and adoption services. Identified strengths were: the health checks of looked after children; the increase in foster placements, including those of Black and minority ethnic heritage; and the integrated support for looked after children, leading to improved educational achievements.

28. The good practice identified in the 2006 annual performance assessment has been maintained. Management of allocations is good with the effect that looked after children are safeguarded, with proper emphasis on positive wider outcomes. All statutory duties are carried out by qualified social workers. Following the 2006 annual performance assessment, arrangements for allocating looked after children to unqualified social workers were formalised. The protocol for allocation to caseworkers who are not qualified as social workers demonstrates satisfactory use of resources as well as sound risk management and emphasis on continuity. Placement stability is very good for

this group. These arrangements are viewed positively by young people, particularly in terms of the intensive levels of personal support and guidance available.

29. Health measures for looked after children are good and better than comparable authorities. The healthy care programme has been used to audit and improve the health provision for looked after children. A steering group closely monitors a comprehensive multi-agency healthy care action plan. Most looked after children receive necessary health assessments, although some teenagers are reluctant to take part in assessments where timing and location are issues. Pressures on the nursing service for looked after children have been eased by effective delegation of some responsibilities to school nurses. There is good access to prompt treatment, including community dentistry, when needed. Looked after children and their carers benefit from good access to the wide variety of CAMHS and associated services in line with individual needs. There is insufficient collation of data to measure the effectiveness of encouragement to adopt healthy lifestyles.

30. The permanence policy is having a good impact on outcomes for looked after children, in particular school achievement. The great majority of looked after children (more than 70%) are in stable placements. Since the permanence policy was introduced in 2003–04, 84 children have been matched with permanent foster carers. In 2006–07, there was proactive work to match children with adoptive parents, resulting in 43 placed with adopters. Placement availability is generally good, but more restricted for teenagers. Exceptionally strong partnership work with community groups increases the capacity to train staff and carers working with Black and minority ethnic children in care and to increase the resources for these children. The new children's homes offer excellent standards of residential care. Placement support services are very good. Children with complex needs or challenging behaviour are placed with very experienced carers who receive a high level of support and enhanced fees. Only limited use is made of agency and out of authority placements, although conversely, high numbers of children are placed by other local authorities in the East Sussex area; they receive routine monitoring and support from the education support service (TEST) and the designated looked after children's nurses.

31. The TEST education support service is highly valued by schools and carers. The bursary scheme for looked after children has had a significant impact on attainment. Improvement in looked after children's GCSE results is impressive, with one in four care leavers now gaining five or more GCSE grades at A*–C. In the two-year period 2004 to 2006, the percentage of those gaining at least one GCSE pass or gaining five or more good GCSE passes has risen at a significantly faster rate than in comparable areas or nationally. The gap in achievement between looked after children and their peers is also closing much more rapidly and is now narrower than in either comparator group. Good attention is paid to personal education plans, but there is room for further improvement in the rate of completion. Further focus is to be provided through the innovative proposal to appoint a virtual headteacher.

32. Responsible behaviour and willingness to contribute to the community are shown by most looked after children and young people. Some progress has been made in raising the ambitions of, and aspirations for, looked after children. Some are keen to take up opportunities to participate in school councils, youth activities, the Youth Cabinet and in community organisations. The placement support service and children's homes facilitate access to a broad range of cultural, leisure and recreational resources for many looked after children, including their own caravan and allotment. However, there is no overall strategy to ensure access to these facilities and activities vary in different parts of the county. Although the rate of offending remains higher than in similar authorities, the development of protocols and restorative justice have contributed to a significant reduction in offending by looked after children in the last year.

33. Arrangements for involving and consulting looked after children and young people in the evaluation and design of services are good. There are some excellent examples of user-led service developments, such as the planning of the new children's homes and managing the looked after children's holiday caravan. The advocacy service offers a good level of support and is successful in involving a significant number of young people. Young people represent their views to, and are routinely consulted by, the corporate parenting panel. Members take a great interest in the progress of looked after children. The great majority of looked after children participate in their reviews but the proportion is lower than in the best performing areas.

34. Looked after young people are well supported in the transition to adulthood. Care leavers are generally very satisfied with the support they receive. They are enabled to remain in their foster placements, where appropriate, and have good access to accommodation, employment and training. There is, however, no overall strategy for the provision of accommodation for care leavers and resources vary across the county. A significant number of recent care leavers are parents. Although the numbers are falling, further work is needed to improve the impact of the teenage pregnancy strategy on looked after children. The proportion taking up education, employment or training is good. Five care leavers are currently successfully supported in higher education and a number have university places offered for the coming year.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Well-integrated multi-agency teams for looked after children.</p> <p>An effective permanence policy.</p> <p>Sustained improvement in the attainment of looked after young people at Key Stage 4.</p>	<p>Lack of a strategy to tackle the uneven provision of leisure resources for looked after children and care leavers and accommodation for care leavers across the county.</p>

<p>Involvement of looked after children in service design and in the community.</p> <p>Establishment of the Healthy Care action plan.</p> <p>Good placement support arrangements.</p>	
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Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



35. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.** The council's priorities and plans demonstrate a good commitment to maintain children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at the heart of its programmes for improvement. The good practice identified in the positive judgements of the 2006 annual performance assessment reflect well-established multi-disciplinary working practice and the good impact of the far reaching review of needs and provision led by the council.

36. A broad range of multi-agency support services is accessible to parents and carers whose children have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and they receive good advice and support in keeping their children healthy. A good multi-agency and community nursing team, working closely with social care services, facilitates safe transitions of care between settings and home.

37. The establishment of integrated processes with health professionals, including a joint commissioning strategy, are central to service plans. There have been imaginative approaches to pooled budgets resulting in improved provision. For example, pooled funding arrangements are in place with the local Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) for speech and language therapists and the provision of equipment for disabled children. This has meant that therapists have been partly based in schools, for example, enabling effective continuity of support for targeted groups.

38. Support from the CAMHS has improved and the range of provision is increasing. The successful localised family intensive support service for disabled children with challenging behaviour has been extended to cover a wider geographical area, the extension being funded by the CAMHS grant and the PCTs' special allocation, which is managed by as a virtual pooled budget. In addition, a consultant psychiatrist has been commissioned to provide psychiatric assessment for children supported by a nurse care coordinator.

39. The council undertook a review of all special educational needs provision in 2005. As a result, an effective culture of partnership working and capacity building in East Sussex has developed between the Children's Services Authority and sections of the voluntary and community sector.

40. Collaboration to improve services includes some excellent innovative practice and improved outcomes in early interventions, for example through the multi-disciplinary early support programme for young children with a range of complex needs and their families. Among services for children aged 0–5, the multi-disciplinary Early Years Communications Team has good capacity to provide advice on learning and speech therapy for children with language and communication disorders in the Foundation Stage, with a very real impact on children and their families. The council provides a wide range of accessible information for parents about their children's development and learning. In well-received restructuring arising from analysis of need, services for primary aged children with autistic spectrum disorders, their parents and schools have been radically refocused to provide faster access and a specialist unit has been set up in a secondary school.

41. Educational provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The council's performance in terms of the quality and timeliness of statutory assessment procedures is very good, placing it in the top quartile of all local authorities. Two special schools have gained national specialist status and pupils in special schools make good progress. Detailed provision and use of data by the council allows pupils' progress to be tracked thoroughly across a variety of measures and demonstrate improvement or identify need for support. Achievement is good for pupils with statements of special educational need at the end of primary and throughout secondary education. Pupils receiving help at the levels of School Action and School Action Plus achieve well from 7 to 11 years of age and continue to make at least satisfactory but less consistent progress in secondary schools.

42. Although the proportion of pupils with statements is in line with national averages, the comparatively high proportion of children and young people with statements in special schools is being tackled as one of the changes arising from the review of educational provision. The review has resulted in one special school being re-designated to cater for children and young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The role of special schools in catering for children and young people with more complex needs has been clarified. However, the outcomes and data are not yet available to evaluate the impact of these changes on individuals or the benefits to their needs and achievement.

43. There are good specialist social care services for families with children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents benefit from the clear advice and support offered. Specialist services include two short break residential units, one of which has been refurbished and redesigned taking into account the views of young people. Families also have easy access to short break placements with in-house foster carers and carers in the voluntary and private sectors. An advocacy service meets regularly with the children receiving

short term breaks and highlights any concerns. Staff have received training for the Common Assessment Framework, which they view positively, although its use in schools is at an early stage of development. They are familiar with involvement in multi-agency teams, working together effectively. Effective duty systems provide timely access to all social care and safeguarding services through the children with disabilities team.

44. The council and its partners, particularly in the voluntary sector, provide an adequate range of recreational, leisure and cultural activities specifically for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The council gives good support for children to gain access to these activities. Pupils at one special school, many of whom have autism, benefit from the provision developed through community links of the SMILE Club. However, the council recognises that there are not enough recreational and holiday opportunities for young people with autism. Plans are in place to increase provision, for example by offering summer holiday play schemes at four special schools.

45. The views of all children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, or their parents and carers when appropriate, are listened to and routinely taken into account through a range of consultation mechanisms. Young people have been involved in the appointment of staff and two are members of the Youth Cabinet. Children and young people receive good support and are encouraged to participate in the planning of changes to their lives, including contributing to annual reviews. As part of their Moving On plan, disabled young people make a DVD about themselves.

46. A good proportion of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are participating in employment, education and training through effective guidance measures. Post-16 education and training has developed well, and from September 2007 all 16–19 departments in special schools will be co-located in secondary schools or further education colleges in purpose built, high quality accommodation. Very effective and excellently coordinated action is taken by a range of agencies to support the transition of young people into adulthood. The transition process is flexible and based entirely on the needs and aspirations of the individual.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Effective strategic planning based on review of provision and assessment of need.</p> <p>Good integration of services and multi-agency working.</p> <p>Development of effective support for those with autistic spectrum disorders.</p> <p>Effective arrangements for transition.</p>	<p>Impact on individuals' progress of the specialist educational provision review is at an early stage of evaluation.</p> <p>Comparative lack of suitable out-of-school and leisure provision for young people with autism.</p>

<p>Support for pre-school children and their families.</p> <p>Comprehensive multi-agency collaboration with schools.</p> <p>Provision for post-16 education and training for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.</p> <p>Support from specialist social care teams.</p>	
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Other issues identified for further investigation

The quality of service provided and the outcomes achieved by children and young people using child and adolescent mental health services

47. **The quality of service provided and the outcomes achieved by children and young people using CAMHS is good.** The 2006 APA reported an improvement in the work of CAMHS with an increase in resources and a reduction in waiting times, although rates for non-acute referrals were higher than the national average. The recent local CAMHS mapping exercise shows that waits for new cases have improved, with only three of 244 new cases waiting more than the nationally acceptable waiting times. Despite these improvements, access to non-acute tier 2 services in rural areas can involve long waits for a few due to location of services.

48. The innovative and wide-reaching CAMHS Strategy is clearly linked to the Children and Young People's Plan. The strategy is underpinned by a needs assessment incorporating the views of users and key stakeholders and is supported by a clear action plan. The integrated model, linked to age-banded integrated children's services structures ensures that CAMHS are accessible through all services provided for children, with a particular focus on prevention and early intervention. A joint commissioning strategy includes ring fenced funding for CAMHS. Management strategies are in place to ensure the integration into core funding streams of successful initiatives that have been established on short term funding. All services are monitoring usage and are tracking progress for individuals but the impact of some services is unclear, as data are not sufficiently developed to enable robust evaluation of outcomes or comparison with statistical neighbours.

49. Parents and carers receive good support to promote the emotional well-being and mental health of their children. A Family Support Strategy provides clear direction for services, including specialist support to vulnerable groups such as families in rural areas, Black and minority ethnic heritage families, Travellers and parents with substance misuse or mental health problems. Targeted educational programmes are provided through a number of agencies including the Youth Offending Team, children's centres and very active, focused

voluntary groups. Good provision helps parents to understand the emotional needs of children and young people and to develop positive parenting strategies. Examples include the STOP Programme, which provides parents with opportunities to develop parenting skills in a group setting, and COPES which provides one-to-one support in rural areas. Users appreciate the services. In addition, work to reduce domestic violence provides good evidence of support, education and treatment to parents and carers as well as the child.

50. A wide range of preventative and early intervention initiatives provide good access to address mental health needs in children and young people, especially in schools. Effective multi-agency working is central to these initiatives with primary mental health workers and educational psychologists working across all agencies to support and educate staff. The training is accessed by a wide range of professionals and is well evaluated. Local Partnerships for Children provide good strategic direction for multi-agency working at preventative and non-specialist levels, tiers 1 and 2.

51. Children and young people are well supported to develop socially and emotionally through integrated services offering both social events and health education, particularly through youth work activities. The Girls Extravaganza programme supports the most isolated and vulnerable young women to build confidence and assertiveness skills whilst accessing education about emotional and physical health needs. User involvement in service development is a strong feature of a range of services. These include Download and the under-19s substance misuse service, where young people with mental health problems are involved in interviewing staff and evaluating specialist CAMHS. In addition, young people are involved in organising events and service evaluation at Girls Extravaganza and the under-19s substance misuse service.

52. Children and young people are well supported to manage change and respond to challenges through integrated services and voluntary sector organisations. Good strategies are in place to assist vulnerable children and young people to deal with transitions. Examples include the provision of primary to secondary school peer mentoring, support for young people who are moving from home tutoring to mainstream school, and focused support to identified young carers. In response to needs analysis, the joint CAMHS and Adult Mental Health Service transitions protocol is being updated to improve access for 16–25 year olds.

53. Access to specialist CAMHS at tier 3 for vulnerable groups is good and improving, particularly through the development of a range of specialist CAMHS roles such as autistic spectrum disorders and complex disabilities posts. Early access for young offenders is good, with provision of multi-agency CAMHS and substance misuse services. Collection of accurate and comprehensive data on usage by Black and minority ethnic groups is limited. However some measures are already in place where need has been identified, funding has been agreed to appoint to a primary mental health worker within the anti-bullying service to deal with the effects of racial harassment and further work is to be developed in the Traveller and English as an additional language service.

54. Current in-patient facilities, local tier 4 services, are recognised by CAMHS managers and commissioners as currently providing an inappropriate environment for the most complex problems. Alternative joint strategies have been employed, to good effect. The provision of an out-of-hours on-call assessment service within the acute hospitals has contributed to a reduction in the number of out-of-area placements from 18 in 2005–06 to two in 2006–07. In addition, over the same period, the number of 16 and 17 year olds admitted to adult mental health beds has fallen to a very low number in the current year. Plans are well advanced to integrate services into the community, for instance for eating disorders, and to open a purpose built CAMHS facility in 2008.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Clear strategy underpinned by joint commissioning and a detailed action plan.</p> <p>Comprehensive preventative and early intervention strategies.</p> <p>Effective multi-agency working.</p> <p>Good access to CAMHS, especially at tiers 1–3.</p> <p>Parenting programmes to meet parental need.</p> <p>User involvement in service design and development.</p>	<p>Underdeveloped data collation and analysis of the outcome of services for different groups of users.</p> <p>Specific services designed to meet the needs of children and young people from Black and minority ethnic groups are at an early stage of development.</p>

The impact of the 14–19 strategy, particularly on vulnerable young people and those in most deprived areas

55. **The impact of the 14–19 strategy on outcomes for vulnerable young people and those in most deprived areas is good with some improving features.** As recognised in the 2006 annual performance assessment, the council and its partners have developed good 14–19 partnerships based on a well thought out strategy and clear terms of reference. Partnerships have established greatly increased confidence in their strategies and provide the basis for good joint working across the county. Action plans are closely aligned to the Children and Young People's Partnership and national and local targets. Very good joint working has set in place a significantly improved range of provision. Although overall standards of attainment for this age group are below the levels found in similar authorities, the value added by education and training is high and increasing more rapidly than in comparable areas. The greatest impact is on outcomes for the most vulnerable young people.

56. Most young people from vulnerable groups make better progress than expected between the ages of 14 and 16, given their starting points, and achieve well educationally in relation to their capability. The achievement of

most young people from Black and minority ethnic groups is comparable to their peers, and in secondary education they make better progress than expected given their prior achievement. Traveller children also make good progress considering their starting points. Support for all vulnerable groups in Key Stage 4 is good and is a key factor in helping to improve attainment. For example, with robust focus from the well regarded TEST, education support team, looked after children's achievement at GCSE has risen rapidly and the gap is closing with their peers at a significantly faster rate than the national average.

57. A rigorous review of special educational needs provision has led to more clearly defined provision for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including access to a wider curriculum for some. For example, young people with autistic spectrum disorders are benefiting from new arrangements to improve access for specialist support in schools and fewer of them are being excluded. Specialist provision for young people with severe learning difficulties and/or disabilities is particularly good post-16, with co-location in mainstream provision. The last annual performance assessment recognised that severely disabled young people are supported well, which enables the majority to continue with their education until age 19.

58. The proportion of all young people in the area who achieve a level 2 qualification by age 19 is lower than that found in similar areas, although it is rising at a faster rate. At Advanced level attainment is below average for similar authorities and England although data on achievement shows that most young people in education between the ages of 16 and 19 make better progress than expected given their starting points. The council has taken positive action to improve the performance of the poorer performing school sixth forms. Entry to Employment success rates are rising and are above average, and apprentice success rates have risen faster than similar authorities and are now average. However advanced apprentice success rates, although improving, are still too low.

59. The overall proportion of young people in the area who are not in education, employment or training at age 16 has reduced and is below the national average. However, it remains high in some of the most deprived areas of East Sussex. The number of young people whose participation status is not known has reduced significantly with improved tracking, to a low level of under 4%. The council and its partners recognise that the high drop out rate of 17 year olds from education, employment and training was a concern in 2006. Innovative measures including courses with start dates throughout the year already show an increased rate of 17 and 18 year olds taking part in education

60. There has been good progress on tackling the numbers of the most vulnerable looked young people not in education, employment or training, and the proportion in these groups has fallen more rapidly than that of their peers. Those at risk of not continuing in education and training, particularly from the eastern rural areas, have benefited greatly from a broader and more flexible curriculum offer including the use of taster courses. Very good partnership working and focus on young people leaving care or who are known to the youth

offending service are starting to impact positively, and the proportion of these young people not in education, employment or training is now below that of their peers.

61. There are examples of excellent projects, especially those supporting vulnerable young people to continue in education, for example the Wealden Centre and Plumpton College taster days and outreach work. The increased flexibility programmes are widening opportunities well, with good access for those in rural and deprived areas. The success rate for young apprenticeships to August 2006 was 100% and there has been a 10% increase in take-up of work-based learning with comparatively high proportions of children with disabilities among the participants.

62. Schools manage different needs of young people effectively. There are thorough and efficient procedures agreed between education and other agencies to exchange information at an early stage, and effective preventative measures are taken. There are sufficient, suitable and accessible school places and admission arrangements give priority to the most vulnerable groups of young people. Attendance in schools has improved significantly with a change of policy on authorising holidays during term time. Overall attendance is now good and reductions in authorised absence continue to be maintained. Very thorough monitoring and support ensure good attendance by looked after children. The systems in place to monitor pupils educated other than at school are appropriate and enable them to make at least satisfactory progress. Children and young people are reintegrated into mainstream provision in a timely way, some with effective support from youth services. The permanent exclusions rate has been reduced and is now average.

63. Most young people, including those from vulnerable groups, are provided with good support, advice and guidance, although young people's satisfaction with the access to information, advice and guidance is mixed. A recent evaluation identifies appropriate opportunities to improve the service. A county-wide prospectus for 14–19 provision is distributed to all Year 11 pupils. A sophisticated electronic prospectus has been developed in partnership with neighbouring councils which significantly improves parents and young people's access to information.

64. A significant amount of work has been done to map routes of progression at 16+ to enable the great majority of young people 14–19 to participate in education or training of their choice. Schools have worked with post-16 providers to ensure that courses are viable and to avoid competing for very limited cohorts. The majority of learners are in colleges and follow a wider range of courses than found in schools. Provision and support are particularly wide ranging in Eastbourne and Hastings. The insufficiency of vocational pathways at level 1 and 2 is recognised and strategies in place have had good impact on recruitment and retention in the East of the county.

65. Tracking the progress of young people, both in institutions and across the area, has improved and the analysis of data and its use in developing services is good particularly for those at risk. Effective planning and resources are in

place to support capital development ensure the necessary workforce to deliver the new 14–19 curriculum entitlements. With the outstanding range of diplomas the area is in a good position to meet the national target to provide guaranteed learning opportunities to all young people over 16.

66. There are good examples of employers' contributions enriching the experience of young people, particularly those vulnerable young people in alternative provision, although work experience opportunities for young people with learning difficulties are not broad enough. There is shared ambition for increasing employer engagement particularly in delivering the new range of diplomas

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>The focus on support to vulnerable groups ensures that many make very good progress taking their starting points into consideration.</p> <p>Good partnerships based on a well thought out strategy and clear terms of reference.</p> <p>Good multi-agency support to those with special educational needs.</p> <p>Very successful bidding for the new diplomas in all local areas.</p> <p>The increased flexibility programmes.</p> <p>Specialist provision for young people with severe learning difficulties and disabilities post-16.</p> <p>Decreasing numbers of care leavers and young people known to the criminal justice system who are not in education, employment or training.</p>	<p>High levels of young people not in education, employment or training in some of the most deprived areas.</p>

Service management



Capacity to improve



67. The management of services for children and young people is good. Capacity to improve further is outstanding. Structural changes to children's services and partnerships within the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and Children's Trust have been led and managed very well, contributing to good service management overall. The council and partners have made significant improvements through the integration of children's services and following the special educational needs review. Many improvements can already be seen in some of the key priorities. Services are making a significant difference across all outcomes, demonstrated, for example in: shorter waiting times for CAHMS; lower numbers of children being re-registered onto the child protection register; placement stability and achievement of looked after children at Key Stage 4; attainment for all in mathematics and English at Key Stage 3; and a countywide reduction in the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training. However, outcomes are not uniformly good and some have not improved significantly, for instance the proportion of all pupils gaining 5 or more good GCSE grades has not risen overall, the rate of teenage pregnancy is not decreasing in some areas and the drop-out rate from education of 17 year olds in 2006 was higher than expected. A few service areas have not been developed quickly or robustly enough, as is apparent from the inspection findings on the youth services. Across some areas there is more to be done: on aspects of consistency in strategies; data collection; mapping and analysis of needs of Black and minority ethnic groups; local project evaluation; and review in health and workforce planning.

68. There is a strong collective commitment from all partners to further integrate and improve children's services with good awareness of the areas for improvement. There is robust financial stewardship and a strong focus on reducing inequalities and improving outcomes for vulnerable groups. The engagement of children, young people, their families and carers in developing priorities and in reviewing strategies is good. The council has a strong framework for redirecting resources to areas of need and areas of underperformance. The restructuring of children's services has significantly strengthened capacity and brought about many improved outcomes. The Children's Trust demonstrates effective leadership and has robust financial and performance management systems in place.

69. The ambitions of the council and its partners for children and young people are excellent. Effective strategic leadership is being provided by the council and its partners. Partnerships have developed a clear vision and set of priorities for children and young people. The Children's Trust Executive Board benefits from well-established strong relationships amongst partners and has wide representation from partner organisations. There is a shared vision on the development and implementation of integrated services for children and young people. Ambitions reflect the involvement and contribution from the local community and key stakeholders. The Children's Trust has produced a high quality Children and Young People's Plan. The plan demonstrates good links and clear alignment of targets between the county's community strategy *Pride of Place*, the Local Area Agreement *All Together Better* and the council business plan.

70. Prioritisation is good. The outcomes for children and young people are given appropriately high prominence within the priorities of the council plan, the community strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan although spending on children's services is above the minimum level suggested by central government and there is a clear corporate commitment to children's services. The priorities reflect a good balance between national and local issues. These include the successful targeting of health resources to meet local priorities and a sharper focus for the commissioning of child and adolescent mental health provision which has reduced waiting times for this service. All council projects and services are shaped by extensive community consultation. The council has made significant efforts to engage with children and young people, parents and carers, for example through the 'Big Vote' and 'Make a Difference' surveys. The priorities are based on a clear articulation of need and gaps in provision for most groups. However, services are at an early stage of developing and sharing knowledge about the needs of Black and minority ethnic groups and the emerging communities. The council and partners dedicate resources to priority activities through its reconciling policy and resources process. For example, in 2006–07 the council directed savings to invest in services for disabled children, the continued development of information sharing and assessment and the commissioning unit, and maintains a focus on them to ensure their successful delivery.

71. The council has adopted a range of effective actions to tackle capacity issues relating to the recruitment and retention of social workers and teachers. Measures have included the use of targeted recruitment campaigns, a strong focus on in-house professional training and development and the improvement of career paths. As a result, the council does not have any serious staff shortages overall that could affect service delivery, and the staffing capability within the organisation is good. The council and its partners have established a workforce development strategy, and have identified the qualifications required for all positions within children's services. However, comprehensive data from across the area has not yet been coordinated to identify more fully future workforce needs across children's services. In addition, the quality of data in some areas is variable, for example in youth services and health.

72. Capacity is enhanced through good partnership working. There are many good examples of effective partnership and inter-agency working through co-located teams such as the children with disabilities team, the family support teams, CAMHS workers in the youth offending teams and social workers in schools. The Common Assessment Framework is being used effectively to share information and jointly plan services for early years and in some schools. The voluntary sector is being used to strengthen capacity and to target provision effectively to the most vulnerable, for example the domestic violence interventions and substance misuse work in Hastings accident and emergency unit and the guidance and support provided by the East Sussex Foster Care Association. The partnership has been very proactive in involving children and parents in designing new services, most notably in the design of new children's homes and respite care. The council has a comprehensive database – KITES – that contains information on all services available to the community.

73. Arrangements for the new Children's Trust Commissioning Strategy build on effective commissioning arrangements for specialist services. The council has recently produced a commissioning strategy for the Children's Trust partnership and there are examples of joint commissioning, aligning of budgets and some pooling, for example services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and CAMHS. The council plans to make this the core activity of the Children's Trust for 2007–08. Financial management within children's services is good. Financial discipline and budget management and control processes are robust. The necessary corrective action is being taken to deal with any projected overspends, for example to reduce the significant overspend in foster placements. An effective approach to risk management is in place and is informing the effective development of children's services. Benchmarking is used, for example in reviewing the high cost of out-of-county placements, but comparative cost benchmarking is not fully embedded.

74. The capacity of the council and its partners to build on much that is in place to deliver better outcomes for children and young people is excellent. There is strong strategic capacity and leadership at the senior level within children's services and clarity of political and professional leadership. The establishment of a new senior management team is providing effective management of change and frontline staff share their agenda. Well monitored plans to implement arrangements are progressing well in most service areas to good effect for the majority of users. Partnerships are gaining real benefits for key groups in special educational needs, CAMHS, youth offending services and 14-19 provision. The council is further building its capacity to meet the children's agenda by increasing project management capacity to drive through the changes, building on embedded arrangements with the private and voluntary sectors.

75. Services for children and young people represent good value for money, although systems for evaluation are underdeveloped in some areas. Costs are relatively low. The quality of most services is good and improving. The emphasis on early intervention and prevention exemplified in the expanding programme of children's centres, although still developing, aims to reap longer-term rewards in terms of good outcomes. The council is strengthening its current approach to the recovery planning process to tackle schools in budget deficit and the large number of schools carrying high balances. Although slow to formulate strategies to improve value for money in areas of higher expenditure such as out-of-county provision, home-to-school transport and special educational needs provision, overall the council is improving its focus on value for money by renewed targeting of areas of high spend. There is not yet a systematic process for evaluating the impact and value of local projects.

76. Performance management is good. There are well-established systems and processes with a good understanding of performance management throughout children's services. Business planning is well-established in children's services, with only a small number of inconsistencies in some strategies and plans underpinning the service plans. There are good examples of the partnership dealing effectively with areas of poor performance, for example improvements to CAMHS, fixed-term exclusions in Hastings and the

number of young people whose education or work status was not known. Good progress is being made in developing effective mechanisms for sharing performance information within the Children's Trust partnership at the strategic level, with clear lines of accountability for specific partnership objectives and a robust challenge framework. Scrutiny arrangements within children's services are developing well with some notable outcomes, particularly the revised contract for delivery of school improvement. The council involves some children and young people well in performance management, for example through its youth council, in making changes to drug and alcohol projects and in enabling looked after children to provide feedback on its services.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Challenging and realistic ambitions with a strong focus on inclusion and tackling disadvantage.</p> <p>Engagement and consultation with children and young people.</p> <p>Effective leadership and management of children's services.</p> <p>Good partnership working.</p> <p>Involvement of children and young people in the design of services.</p>	<p>Mapping and analysis of need across services for diverse groups, particularly Black and minority ethnic and emerging communities.</p> <p>The variable quality of health data and youth management information data.</p> <p>Progress on value for money challenges, evaluation of local projects and systematic use of benchmarking.</p>

Annex A

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

Summary

Areas for judgement	Grade awarded
The contribution of <i>the local authority's children's services</i> in maintaining and improving outcomes for children and young people.	3
The council's overall <i>capacity to improve</i> its services for children and young people	4

East Sussex County Council consistently delivers services above the minimum requirements for children and young people. The majority of services are performing well. There is very good partnership working. The Children and Young People's Plan clearly describes a shared vision which is supported by strategic goals that are driven by the needs of those it aims to serve.

All of the recommendations from last year's annual performance assessment have been subject to carefully targeted action and progress has been reviewed regularly. East Sussex has a clear and precise knowledge of what it does well and where it could improve. It has been proactive in devising strategies that involve multi-team working to support children, young people and their families. The council has excellent capacity to improve its services further.

The full annual performance assessment can be found at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=73668&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa_2006_845.pdf

Annex B

CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Outcomes for children and young people in the East Sussex are good. Children and young people are generally healthy. The range of CAMHS provision is very good and consequently access is good and waiting times are short for all but a few in rural areas. Those most in need of protection benefit from prompt support, and looked after children have good outcomes, improving particularly rapidly in secondary education. Educational outcomes are adequate overall and are improving in many aspects, although standards are not good enough. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do well, with effective help for those under the age of five and when moving to adult services. The proportion of young people continuing education or training after the age of 16 or gaining employment is satisfactory and the gap is closing against the national average.
2. Service management in East Sussex is good. The ambitions of the council and its partners for children and young people are excellent. Effective strategic leadership in well-established partnerships provides a clear vision and coherent priorities. There are few inconsistencies and underdeveloped priorities. Improvements are evident in many key priority areas. Management and workforce capacity is good and an energetic voluntary sector adds much to the capacity to improve outcomes for diverse groups. Good performance management systems take account of the views of children and young people well.
3. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good and priorities are based on a thorough analysis of health needs. There is strong multi-agency planning for CAMHS, providing services that are innovative and inclusive although not yet meeting identified needs for all Black and minority ethnic and mixed heritage groups. Looked after children have very good health provision, with good outcomes. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from a good range of multi-agency and specific nursing teams.
4. Children and young people appear safe. The Local Safeguarding Children Board provides good leadership among the range of partners, with an effective business and training plan. Children are cared for and educated in safe environments. There is good multi-agency practice regarding domestic violence and bullying with strengthened provision to help the victims of racist bullying. Child protection registrations and plans are well managed. Looked after children are supported well in high quality, stable placements, with good attention from elected members through the Corporate Parenting Panel.
5. Outcomes in educational attainment are adequate and improving, although the rate of improvement is uneven. However, the value added by training and education, taking starting points into consideration is very good. Detailed data analysis and focused support contribute to some notably good

outcomes: the improved success rate of looked after children taking GCSEs and improved attainment in Key Stage 3 English and maths. Pupils with statements in special schools make good progress. Attendance has improved and is good. Support and challenge to schools has been reshaped by the council, with better effect in secondary schools. A far-reaching review of services for special educational needs is having a good impact on the clarity and range of provision, although the effect on individual attainment is yet to be seen. Young people make good progress through involvement in youth work, although the rates of participation may be below national benchmarks.

6. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good, with very high numbers contributing their views through the Big Vote, an innovative consultation scheme to decide priorities. Local democratic representation through school councils, the Youth Cabinet and UK Youth Parliament is highly inclusive. Looked after children and young people make a good contribution to improving services. Much effort is made to ensure that children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities submit their views in reviews. The great majority of children and young people behave responsibly. Partners work closely together to target antisocial behaviour effectively and those who offend get satisfactory help.

7. Strategies to improve provision for 14 to 19 year olds are good, although, as yet, attainment outcomes are only adequate overall. The partnership has been highly successful in bidding for the new diplomas in all local areas. There is good increased flexibility, although more needs to be done to engage employers. A comprehensive electronic prospectus has improved access to information countywide. Well-focused support results in good proportions of care leavers and young people who offend who are in education, employment or training, although the proportion not in education, employment or training is still too high in some deprived areas. Specialist provision for young people with severe learning difficulties is very good. Young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good information and guidance.

8. The capacity of the council services to improve is outstanding. The high quality Children and Young People's Plan is clearly aligned to the county's community strategy and the Local Area Agreement. The review of the plan shows collective commitment from the council and partners to further integrate services and secure better outcomes, particularly for the most vulnerable, based on good awareness of the areas for improvement. Integration of services, the special educational needs review and 14–19 partnerships have been well led and managed with some good impact. The council has a strong framework for redirecting resources to areas of need and areas of underperformance. With good management and workforce capacity, robust financial and performance management systems in place, the area has excellent capacity to continue to build on improvements.

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 East Sussex and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being. Together with the annual performance assessment of children's services, joint area reviews focus on the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and are well prepared to secure economic well-being. This review explores these issues by focusing on children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, children who are looked after and children at risk or requiring safeguarding, and a few additional investigations. It evaluates the collective contribution made by all relevant children's services to outcomes for these children and young people.

4. The review took place in two stages consisting of an analysis stage (where recorded evidence was scrutinised) and a two-week fieldwork stage (where inspectors met children and young people and those who deliver services for them).