

Joint area review

Warrington Children's Services Authority Area

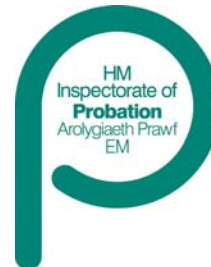
Review of services for children and young people

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

Age group: All

Published: 21 December 2007

Reference no: 877



© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the local authority or at www.ofsted.gov.uk

Contents

Introduction	2
Context	2
Main findings	3
Grades	4
Recommendations	4
Areas for investigation through fieldwork during the joint area review	
1. Safeguarding	6
2. Looked after children and young people	8
3. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	11
4. Additional investigations	14
5. Service management	21
6. Capacity to improve	21
Annex A: The APA letter	26
Annex B: Children and young people's section of the corporate assessment report	27
Annex C: Summary of joint area review and annual performance assessment arrangements	29

Introduction

1. The latest annual performance assessment for Warrington 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:
 - child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)
 - services to reduce substance misuse
 - 14–19 services and provision.

Context

4. The borough of Warrington covers 176 square kilometres and lies at the centre of the north west region's communications network. The total population is 194,711, of which almost 25% are children and young people. Growth has been rapid over the last 30 years but is now stable, with the overall population forecast to change very little in size between now and 2021. The demographic profile of the borough is similar in terms of age and gender to that of the UK as a whole.
5. Black and minority ethnic groups represent 2.8% of the resident population (2004 figures), an increase of 0.7% since the 2001 census. Non-British white groups represent a further 2%. Between 1 May 2004 and 30 June 2006 there were 872 migrant workers registering for work with the Home Office and employed within Warrington from the eight Eastern European countries most recently joining the European Union.
6. The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) oversees the development and integration of children's services in the borough including the creation of Children's Trust arrangements. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) works with the borough council, Connexions, colleges, training providers and schools in addressing the 14–19 strategy. Post-16 education and training is provided by one general further education (GFE) college, one sixth form college, seven school sixth forms, and 20 work-based training providers. A partnership group oversees provision of Education to Employment (E2E), which is provided by YMCA Training. The centre has capacity to accommodate 30 E2E learners at any one time. Over the last three years the centre has supported approximately 90

learners per year. Adult and community learning, including family learning, is provided by the council in partnership with local colleges, YMCA, Fordton Leisure Centre, University of the Third Age and Workers Educational Association.

7. Health care for children is provided by Warrington Primary Care Trust. North Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust provides acute health services, whilst specialist mental health services for children are provided by the 5 Boroughs Partnership NHS Trust. The North West Ambulance Service Trust covers Warrington and is in the North West Strategic Health Authority Area. Police and fire authorities cover Cheshire, Warrington and Halton.

8. There are, on average, 200 children and young people looked after by the council and there are currently 79 children on the child protection register. The council maintains 71 primary schools, one nursery school, 12 secondary schools, a pupil referral unit, and three special schools. Thorn Cross Young Offender Institution is in the Warrington area.

9. All three and four year olds can access an early years education place through the maintained and/or private and voluntary sector. Provision includes: one maintained nursery school, 27 maintained nursery units at primary schools, 46 day nurseries, and 35 pre-school play groups. Four children's centres have been established and are fully operational. A further seven centres will be operational in 2008. Thirty-nine schools are already providing an extended services programme. Under the Building Schools for the Future Programme, Warrington will see the delivery of one new school by 2010 and a further two by 2016.

Main findings

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

- good progress is being made to integrate children's services with effective partnership working and joint commitment to continuous improvement. Outcomes for children in Warrington are good
- arrangements for safeguarding children and young people are good. Although the timeliness, and quality, of assessments in a small number of cases are variable, the outcomes for children and young people are good
- services for looked after children are good with effective corporate parenting arrangements in place and good education and health outcomes in comparison to other areas. The sharp focus on this group over a period of years has ensured continued improvement
- services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. They generally make good progress in school and achieve well. The level of their inclusion in mainstream activities is also good

- there have been significant improvements in CAMHS, particularly at tiers 1 and 2, and good progress in developing services generally. Tier 3 provision is improving but individual needs are not always met in ways that are appropriate to age and timeliness
- the contribution of local services in supporting children and young people who misuse substances, and the support offered to their families and carers, are good. Focused and joint work is reducing the incidence of harm and ensuring children and young people receive timely help and support in schools and their local communities
- services for 14–16 year olds are good. Those for young people aged over 16 years are also leading to improved outcomes
- good service management with effective leadership and increasing management capacity is ensuring effective and integrated services, good value for money and excellent prospects for sustained improvement. The high quality family support provision in Warrington is facilitating new ways of working and increasing accessibility to a wide range of services.

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 initial assessments in all child protection cases are routinely checked for quality and timeliness and administrative and information processes are fully in place.

For action over the next six months

The local partnership should:

- examine the use of paediatric beds, rate of CAMHS assessments and admission, discharge and follow up arrangements for young people over 16 years
- develop and implement clear systems and criteria for case transfer to and from family support services
- improve arrangements for the participation of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in service planning.

For action in the longer term

The local partnership should:

- develop more flexible and responsive services to address the needs of looked after children with more complex emotional and behavioural difficulties
- enhance the involvement of work-based learning providers and the voluntary sector in the strategic development of 14-19 provision.

Equality and diversity

11. A good range of accessible services support minority groups well. For example there is an expanding Polish population and good care and attention is given by partners to ensuring services are accessible and remain relevant to need. Partnership working with the voluntary sector is good and this is facilitating a range of children's services and opportunities to meet the diverse needs of the community. Consultation on a range of issues has led to service changes and improvements and there is evidence of considerable impact in bridging the gap in education standards for looked after children, Black and minority ethnic and other non-British white groups in the borough. The number of foster carers from Black and minority ethnic groups is in proportion to the general population in Warrington, but this gives little scope for placement choice, particularly in the most complex cases. Excellent work is being undertaken to reduce hate crime in all its manifestations and the police are working constructively with all the partners in the context of a good community safety strategy. Strategic planning in respect of equality and diversity has been comparatively slow but good work and leadership is now being shown to implement fully and monitor the equalities strategy. This includes workforce monitoring to ensure it reflects the local

population and awareness raising in schools through international exchange arrangements.

Safeguarding



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Outstanding family support services.</p> <p>Success in finding children who go missing.</p> <p>Excellent multi-agency child protection training.</p> <p>Innovative practice of hazard assessments by children's centres and fire service.</p> <p>Excellent local resource in the Peace Centre (Tim Parry/Jonathan Ball Young People's Centre).</p>	<p>Insufficiently clear criteria and arrangements to transfer cases to and from family support.</p> <p>Information systems in children's social care which do not currently fully support assessment processes.</p>

13. The 2006 annual performance assessment reported that joint working to safeguard children and young people was generally strong but that there were inconsistencies in the management of a small number of child protection cases. Since 2006 there has been a concentrated effort by all agencies, led by an effective Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LCSB), to improve practice. The most recent data, including registration and de-registration rates, and numbers and timeliness of initial and core assessments, indicate good performance. Good progress is being made in road safety, anti-bullying, reducing domestic violence, raising general awareness and ensuring safe recruitment strategies. Of major significance has been the development of an innovative and outstanding family support service which is enabling services to unite effectively at an early stage to support the most vulnerable children. The model is established on an emerging network of children's centres of which there are currently four with a planned roll-out of a further ten.

14. There are good approaches to tackling safeguarding issues in the community. The LCSB has established a good electronic information system on children's safety for professionals, available through the local LCSB website. The

range of leaflets for the public, including for children and young people, that explains the service standards they can reasonably expect is limited. All schools have good arrangements for child protection with designated teachers and child protection policies in place with appropriate staff checks. The education service is working hard to deliver effective local programmes to help raise children's awareness and to enable children and young people to protect themselves, for example on the roads and from the threat of abuse and harm. This work is having good impact in reducing child road accidents and incidents of bullying within schools.

15. The service reception and referral and assessment teams in children's social care are well-staffed with enthusiastic and motivated workers delivering, in the main, prompt responses to members of the public and referrals from other agencies. The teams redirect children with lower levels of need to the dedicated family support service, including an excellent NSPCC service for families involved with domestic abuse. Good tracking arrangements are in place to ensure that follow-up services continue to meet children's needs. Although the family support provision is excellent, the arrangements and criteria for transferring responsibility between services is not sufficiently well defined. Multi-agency work for children who are on the child protection register is adequate with clear evidence of social care, health and schools' involvement and good involvement of parents and children in making plans about their lives. Currently the information systems used to support assessment processes in social care are not sufficient and are shortly to be replaced. A small number of assessments examined during the review did not meet the standards in terms of timeliness or quality.

16. The LSCB is well established and fully operational. A recent review of safe recruitment across all member agencies displayed good recruitment practice in the borough. As a further consequence a child protection foundation course for voluntary sector agencies has also been established. There is good work to improve the involvement of children and young people in meetings about their safeguarding needs. Warrington has had no serious case reviews for several years but is alert to the findings from significant reviews of cases held in other parts of the country. There are good local arrangements to protect the public against adults who pose high risks to children and young people.

17. The safeguarding unit within the council is working effectively to combine the provision of advice for all agencies, chairing reviews, coordinating training and also supporting specialist workers focusing on reducing the dangers of sex offenders. The unit also provides good social work support services to the Thorn Cross Youth Offending Institution. Good work ensures that the whereabouts of all children is known and this includes excellent procedures for children missing from education and a protocol for children missing from care developed between the police, children's services and the care providers.

18. Family support services are outstanding and include a wide range of partners. There are structured programmes to support parents, carers and children. The resources are also available to older children with support from a

good youth service. An extensive range of services are delivered to children assessed as being in need and to self-referring families. An example of excellent practice is the offer of home safety visits with the Fire Brigade when a child is six months old, which includes looking at, in the first instance, the identification of potential hazards in the home, free provision of basic home safety equipment, and a pathway into longer term parenting support through Sure Start programmes.

19. The local health service has a good model of support, the Child in Need Care Pathway, which ensures that the most vulnerable children are provided with coordinated support to meet their assessed medical and social needs. About 400 local children and young people are currently supported in this way. Domestic abuse work, carried out by the police, children's services, housing and health and the voluntary sectors including Women's Aid, St Joseph's Community/Family Support Centre and the NSPCC is strong. Their work includes supporting all victims to talk about their experience, ensuring the sharing of information across agencies and conducting joint assessments of need and risk. These services also deliver good therapeutic help for adults and children and young people whilst ensuring their continued safety.

20. There is a strong link between the development of children's centres and regeneration activity in the borough. The partnership is effective in shifting resources and provision to ensure children and families with the most complex needs receive the services they need. Arrangements to monitor and measure outcomes are good. The Tim Parry/Jonathan Ball Young People's Centre (known as the Peace Centre) is an excellent and well used resource built following the IRA Warrington bomb in 1993 and opened in 2000. An extensive range of programmes are run by, for example, the NSPCC, youth service and a charitable Foundation for Peace to help reconcile young people through dialogue and learning programmes for all ages.

Looked after children and young people



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good physical health outcomes.</p> <p>Good educational achievement with individually tailored support packages.</p> <p>No permanent exclusions for over three years.</p> <p>Good action to promote employment, education and training and the provision of suitable accommodation for care leavers.</p> <p>Robust development of corporate parenting responsibilities across health, education and social care.</p>	<p>No dedicated CAMHS for looked after young people aged 14–19.</p>

22. Warrington gives high priority to looked after children and invests resources to achieve good outcomes for them. The physical health of looked after children is well addressed and coordinated by a dedicated nurse and paediatrician and well supported by trained carers. In 2006–07, 93% of children had annual health assessments and dental checks (9–10% higher than national or statistical neighbours). This has been consistently good since 2003.

23. There is a responsive approach to feedback from young people who decided to decline their health appointments. Health needs are suitably reviewed through pathway planning and actively followed up when required. Where substance misuse is identified, the PHAZE team provide a good service with substantial numbers of referred young people taking up the service, leading to improved outcomes in over 50% of cases. There are, however, insufficient flexible and responsive services to support looked after children with more complex emotional and behavioural difficulties. Tier 2 CAMHS has recently been established for ages 6–13 but there is no dedicated CAMHS worker for looked after children. The social care therapeutic team for looked after children has had staffing shortages with delays in work to help children understand their life stories. An effective therapeutic panel identifies therapeutic pathways for specific children and also which feeds into the strategic commissioning process.

24. There are good arrangements to support looked after children in their placements. Education, health and social care services demonstrate clear understanding of their corporate parenting responsibilities. All children have a named qualified social worker and statutory visits, care plans and reviews are completed within timescales. Statutory visits are well recorded but no records of unannounced visits were seen in the sample of cases reviewed. Staffing shortages over the past 12–18 months have led to some children and carers experiencing

repeated changes of their social workers but there is now greater continuity of support following the establishment of a permanency team.

25. Safeguarding managers also act as independent reviewing officers providing good continuity of planning through to when a young person leaves care. Social care colleagues value the role and the accessibility of the safeguarding team.

26. Placement stability is good and shows a steady improvement over the last three years with 10% of children experiencing three or more placements during the year. Placement performance is good overall with a high percentage of children in foster placements, including older children, with a good proportion in kinship arrangements which the council works hard to secure. Placements for black and minority ethnic children and young people, sibling groups and children and young people with complex needs are in insufficient supply and the council is working with local consortia to address these gaps. Only 20 out of nearly 200 looked after children are placed out of area in specialised or kinship placements which effectively meet their assessed needs. Eight carers spoken to by inspectors reported that they were well supported and felt valued by the annual foster carer event. They felt more could be done to clarify information on financial entitlements and access to training. Care leavers felt that information in the form of guides could be improved.

27. The council provides good support to the significant numbers of looked after children who are placed by other authorities in independent fostering or residential care placements in Warrington. The local authority has been proactive in setting up a working group to address the safeguarding and resource issues raised. This is a credit to an authority which remains relatively low in spending and one which is achieving good value for money in its services.

28. There is an impressive shared commitment to the education of looked after children. Children are well supported by schools, with individually tailored support packages and monthly monitoring of targets. All schools have a designated teacher and all looked after children are on school rolls, with no permanent exclusions for the past three years. The number of looked after children achieving one GCSE in 2006 was above that of national and statistical neighbours and the trend continues to improve in 2007. Three care leavers are currently being supported at university. There is a well attended and inclusive annual award ceremony, this year attended by 120 young people.

29. Attendance targets for 2006–07 have not been met, with 15% (as opposed to a 7% target) of looked after children missing more than 25 days of schooling, which is slightly higher than national figures and neighbouring councils. Officers have a good understanding of patterns and trends, including a link to fixed term exclusions, and a robust action plan put in place to tackle the exclusion issue is showing immediate impact, for example a 20% increase in attendance for the last quarter.

30. The quality and consistency of young people's contribution to their reviews was identified in last year's annual performance assessment as an area for improvement. A very high percentage (96%) contributed to their reviews during 2006–07. This shows considerable improvement and is higher than national figures and neighbouring councils. During the last year only six children have used advocacy provided by National Youth Advocacy Service. This service is now being re-launched with awareness raising sessions delivered to staff and young people with the aim of making this provision more accessible.

31. The participation of looked after children at a strategic level is adequate. There have been some good developments, such as joint work with the youth service to involve looked after children in the UK Youth Parliament, the establishment of a care leavers' group and involvement in recent recruitment of senior managers. Corporate parenting arrangements are adequate with good recent progress to extend the role and to increase local employment opportunities for looked after young people. There is some evidence of good partnership working with other council departments, for example provision of free leisure passes and the development of a supported tenancy scheme for care leavers. The majority live in safe and suitable accommodation and are engaged in employment, education or training. A successful tenancy scheme has been developed in partnership with the housing department and there is good joint working with partners such as Connexions, the youth offending team and the youth service. A recently introduced employability scheme supports 13 young people. Work with unaccompanied asylum seekers has been a growing area, with 21 young people currently supported. A specialist worker has been appointed within the leaving care team.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Inadequate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Adequate	<input type="checkbox"/>	Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Outstanding	<input type="checkbox"/>
------------	--------------------------	----------	--------------------------	------	-------------------------------------	-------------	--------------------------

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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good leadership and promotion of inclusion in the local authority leading to improved outcomes.</p> <p>Good multi-agency and school support.</p> <p>Good progress in schools and colleges.</p> <p>Significant improvements in the take-up of direct payments and respite care.</p> <p>Effective transition planning.</p>	<p>Insufficient opportunities for children and young people to be actively involved in the development of services.</p>

33. The council and partners provide good leadership and support for inclusion of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in mainstream activities. There are good planning and monitoring procedures in place. A major review is underway in schools and in the partnership as a whole to further develop provision and to improve outcomes.

34. Very good early years support is provided through effective multi-agency assessment at the Child Development Centre and the children's centre at Sandy Lane. Parents and carers have a very high level of satisfaction with the services they receive from the pre-school professionals. They have been involved in the design of the new Child Development Centre and in the developing integrated assessment process.

35. The emphasis on early intervention is promoted through the introduction of funding prior to a statement of special educational need being initiated, which has been effective in reducing the demand for statements whilst meeting the needs of the young people. Schools are very supportive of this initiative, which provides short term funding for preventative work. The production of statements within 18 weeks is good and the statements are of good quality. In 2005–06, 89% of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were placed in a mainstream setting compared with 69.5% in similar authorities and 72.3% nationally.

36. The effective promotion of inclusion has led to many children and young people being educated successfully in mainstream schools. There are some very good examples of fully inclusive provision in schools in Warrington. Special schools make a significant and at times outstanding contribution to the provision for children and young people. However, too many young people in one of the special schools are being excluded for fixed periods. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in school. The local authority has very good monitoring arrangements in place. The school improvement service is effective in ensuring that schools are challenged and

supported in raising standards. There is an effective special educational needs coordinators' network which is facilitated by the local authority and an effective staff training programme. The termly planning meetings involving the school support services in coordinating and planning special educational needs are highly valued. The 16–19 year old provision at one of the special school is good and enables learners to develop workplace and other skills.

37. The educational performance of post-16 learners is good. Success rates at the local GFE college increased from 68% in 2004 to 75% in 2006. It provides a good range of full time courses which focus on meaningful life and employability skills. Success rates at the sixth form college also increased from 71% in 2004 to 78% in 2006. The overall success rates for completing work-based learning programmes in 2006 was 59.3% compared to the national average of 53.2%. However, the proportion of local work-based provision for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was only 10.1% in 2006, significantly lower than the 14.5% national figure.

38. Parents and carers are actively encouraged to be involved in their children's reviews of progress, with good levels of engagement. The vast majority are satisfied with the services they receive. However, there are concerns from some parents regarding a lack of information and understanding about who to go to for assistance. Whilst the common assessment framework is being successfully developed with a lead professional for families, a parallel key worker role for special educational needs has not yet been fully integrated. Speech and language therapy waiting times have reduced from 24 to 12 months but are still too long. The training of school staff to deliver programmes developed by speech and language therapists has been valued by schools.

39. There is good transition planning. Transition plans are now in place for over 95% of young people to assist with the move to adult services. The parent partnership scheme has been actively involved in supporting the process. By Year 11 all young people with a statement have a transition plan when moving into post-16 education and training. There are 68 families in receipt of direct payments, which is a 60% increase from the previous year. This allows families to purchase their own care packages for their children. Respite care provision has improved using the fostering and adoption team for family-based respite care and is now good. Facilities for respite care for complex needs are met outside the local authority, with plans to refurbish Ross Close to improve the internal provision. This facility is greatly valued by parents.

40. CAMHS provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Improved resources at tier 2 involving a multi-agency team have been developed and there are encouraging signs of improved openness and access to the service. Tier 3 services have been developed with the establishment of a specialist psychiatrist post for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

41. Effective measures are in place to involve children and young people in reviewing provision made for them individually. There are good examples of their involvement in school councils. There has been some success in involving children and young people in wider issues such as the use of the 'All about us' group, who are used to gather views concerning disabled young people moving from school to college. Views are also sought through the 'Oi Listen' group on more general planning issues such as transition reviews at age 14. Involvement of children and young people in broader strategic planning is weak. This has been recognised by the area and active steps are currently being taken to address this issue.

42. There is an adequate range of opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to engage in activities outside school. A good and accessible transport system assists the development of independent travel for these children and young people. A specific post has been established to develop sports activity for the disabled that involves training for workers as well as establishing a sports club. Planet Blue, a drop in at the Peace Centre, is well used by young people with disabilities. However, only 20% of the venues for youth work are fully accessible to young people with mobility difficulties.

Other issues identified for additional investigation

Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)

43. **The quality of the service provided and the outcomes achieved by children and young people using CAMHS is adequate. It has improved recently and has some good features.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Clear and strong leadership and effective partnership working has led to some important improvements.</p> <p>Improved access to tier 2 provision for six to 14 year olds.</p> <p>Good screening of referrals into tier 3 services and very good waiting times.</p> <p>Urgent mental health assessments take place promptly.</p>	<p>Limited access to tier 2 provision for 14 to 19 year olds and no 24-hour coverage.</p> <p>Appropriate care in settings suitable for older adolescents is not always available.</p> <p>Gaps in provision for some 16 to 19 year olds as they move to adult services.</p>

44. From a low starting point Warrington has made a number of significant improvements and has built momentum to ensure services move towards an improved comprehensive CAMHS for children and young people. There is good and improving primary health care in place where children, young people and their parents can access information and support to promote good mental health, emotional well-being and behaviour. Access to specialist services has improved for children and young people under 14 years but is limited for children and young

people between 14 and 19 years. There is improving access to services for more severe and complex disorders but tier 4 highly specialised provision is inadequate. This is recognised by mental health services and commissioners of services. Relationships are very good between the council and health partners, although some gaps remain in services.

45. The 2006 annual performance assessment highlighted weak progress on developing a comprehensive CAMHS, as described in the Children's National Service Framework. The CAMHS joint commissioning arrangements together with a refreshed CAMHS strategy are helping to make significant gains on progress towards a comprehensive CAMHS, which is now acceptable. For example, specialist urgent assessments take place within 24 hours or the next working day, access to preventative and early intervention services has improved for those under 14 years of age, and waiting times for accessing specialist tier 3 CAMHS are very good.

46. Partner organisations are very committed to delivering a high quality CAMHS, and significant investment in recent years has seen a move away from an over reliance on tier 3 provision to tiers 1 and 2 to enhance preventative services. Clear and strong leadership, good service management and partnership working between the local authority and NHS organisations are making significant improvements to the quality of service provided resulting in some good and improving outcomes for children and young people. Access to the specialist tier 2 services has improved for children less than 14 years with some early signs of positive impact. But the service is limited for those between 14 and 19 years with some effective support provided via services such as the behaviour support team and educational psychology. Partner organisations are aware of the need to widen this and also to provide improved cover for more vulnerable children and young people.

47. There is good primary mental health care with a range of support for most young people in place or being developed. Very good support for young children is available through the emerging children's centres and schools promoting emotional well-being, better behaviour and good mental health. Within the voluntary sector, excellent provision is also offered by the Children's Society Participation Programme and programmes provided by St Joseph's children's centre. As a result some very good outcomes are being achieved in improving behaviour, improving attendance, reducing exclusion from school and improving academic performance.

48. Constraints on funding have hampered service development in the tier 3 provision in the past. Tier 3 remains less well funded than neighbouring services. Nevertheless, with the help of significant investment, especially into tiers 1 and 2 services, good teamwork and innovative decision-making improvements are being made and relationships between other agencies and partners are much improved. Training and awareness is taking place to ensure all professionals within the children's workforce can promote and recognise mental health problems. However this is not yet fully embedded. Arrangements are in place to ensure urgent mental

health assessments take place within 24 hours or the next working day. However, 24-hour cover does not extend to weekends and bank holidays.

49. Older young people do not have access to care in a safe environment which is suited to their age and development. This includes young people who are self-harming or have an eating disorder. Young people are placed on paediatric wards and generally receive a good level of care. However, this is compromised by the lack of prompt assessment by mental health services, the lack of clarity over who should assess young people over 16 years and the absence of clear pathways for discharge and follow through. There is recognition that the tier 3 service requires more development and strategies are identified to improve provision.

50. The capacity of specialist services to meet the needs of 16 and 17 year olds is adequate, although some weaknesses remain. The use of adult wards is being eliminated for all but a few older adolescents who identify more readily with young adults, with systems in place to manage and monitor this issue. As a result there were no under-16 admissions during 2006–07 and, although there were a number of admissions of young people between 16 and 17 years, the nurse for safeguarding children and young people was informed in the majority of cases, which is a major improvement on previous years. Satisfactory transition processes are in place, although some gaps remain regarding 17 and 19 year olds and whether these young people are treated by children's or adult services. The care programme approach is adapted for transition planning and services know which people require transition with robust protocols in place.

51. Despite the lack of a dedicated service for children and young people who misuse substances, and some staffing constraints within the youth offending team, there is good access to tier 3 CAMHS. Support for young people with complex behavioural needs who offend is limited. Access to CAMHS for children and young people who are looked after is adequate and, although there is no dedicated CAMHS support staff, arrangements have been made to ensure that children and young people are able to access appropriate CAMHS. It is, however, too early to evaluate the full impact of this development.

52. Support for CAMHS for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good and specific service improvements are in place. Effective links have been established between the child development centre and specialist CAMHS at tier 3 level, which has resulted in clinicians undertaking joint consultations and assessments. Good links have also been established with the new tier 2 services, but it is too early to judge their impact on services for these children and young people. Provision for children with complex learning difficulties has improved, with a joint approach to the management of children with severe behavioural needs established. Transition arrangements for children between pre-school and school are very good. Transition for young people aged 16 to 19 years leaving the paediatric service and for handover of young people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder are weak.

Support for young people who misuse substances

53. **The contribution of local services in supporting children and young people who misuse substances, and their families and carers, is good.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Consistently good outcomes delivered by PHAZE, the young people's substance misuse service.</p> <p>Very good partnership arrangements with excellent training in tier 1 and tier 2 interventions for front line workers.</p> <p>Effective screening, assessment and referrals.</p> <p>Good support (including CAMHS) for children and young people whose parents/carers misuse substances.</p>	<p>Uncertain funding of young people's substance misuse service.</p> <p>High number (although recently stabilised) of alcohol related attendances at accident and emergency departments and increased rates of paracetamol overdosing amongst 14 and 15 year olds.</p>

54. Partnership arrangements between statutory and voluntary services are good overall and high quality tier 1 and 2 training provided by the PHAZE team contributes well to meet the needs of young people requiring more intensive support. The outcomes achieved by this group of vulnerable children and young people are good.

55. The 2006 annual performance assessment identified that all young people who misuse substances had access to specialist assessments within five working days and early intervention and treatment services within 10 working days. This remains the case and the joint area review also identified some excellent features of practice delivered by the PHAZE team. Tiers 1–3 services are delivered primarily through PHAZE and tier 4 services are available in the region if required.

56. Evaluations of PHAZE services by users and providers report consistently high levels of satisfaction and effectiveness. Users of the service could describe to inspectors how well they now understood the issues likely to affect them if they continued with risky substance misuse and gave a very clear account of the actions they had taken to reduce potential harm to themselves and their friends. Very good outcomes have also been recorded for young people known to the youth offending team who had reduced their drug and alcohol intake as a result of positive interventions.

57. There are high numbers of young people presenting at Warrington Hospital's accident and emergency department with alcohol related problems. Data cannot identify how many currently live in the borough, nevertheless, this remains a priority issue for Warrington because the north west region has for some time recorded the highest rates of alcohol use amongst young people nationally. In

response, successful preventative approaches have been developed and young people's behaviour is slowly beginning to show signs of change. A worrying trend, however, are the increasing numbers of young people aged between 14 and 15 years being admitted to hospital as a result of self harm through paracetamol overdosing.

58. PHAZE has been highly effective in engaging a wide range of partners to raise the profile of preventative work. Comprehensive needs analysis and market research have been used effectively to underpin the strategic development of tier 1 and 2 services. In partnership with the local drug action team (DAT), PHAZE staff have trained high numbers of front line workers across sectors to deliver tier 1 and 2 interventions, including teachers, youth workers, social workers, voluntary sector staff, community police support officers and fire service staff. This has significantly increased the number of young people in receipt of clear and consistent information about the impact of substance misuse. PHAZE contributes significantly to the success of the local DAT team in achieving challenging targets. However, future funding arrangements are uncertain, resources are stretched and some services are no longer available within PHAZE, most notably a specialist CAMHS worker and 1.5 posts within the outreach team.

59. A number of young people have been trained as peer educators to deliver drug awareness programmes, and a small group has produced high quality publicity materials which have been distributed widely across the borough. Young people consider these to be informative and innovative in style. As a result of well-developed and targeted curriculum materials, young people can demonstrate good knowledge of the negative effects of substance misuse. Work to reduce substance misuse by children and young people in primary and secondary schools has been effectively supported by the Healthy Schools Service. Smoking cessation groups have been set up in some secondary schools and the Smoke Free Zone initiative has reduced incidents of smoking on school premises. There has been a tangible reduction in street drinking and under-age drinking by the 14–16 age group in local pubs and clubs within the city centre as a result of well-targeted, collaborative work between partners, including the police, local business and the trading standards council. The PHAZE outreach team has continued to develop street initiatives in targeted areas to address alcohol misuse in identified hot spots.

60. Referral pathways are clearly understood by services that work with young people and good protocols are in place, particularly between PHAZE, the CAMHS team and the accident and emergency department at Warrington Hospital. In addition, a straightforward screening and assessment tool has been developed by PHAZE for use by all agencies to ensure that a tailored approach can be applied. As a result, the most vulnerable young people across the borough receive timely and effective support. Though small in number, the PHAZE team manages wide coverage to target more vulnerable young people known to organisations such as the youth offending service, and voluntary sector projects such as the YMCA and the NSPCC. Evaluations of work undertaken demonstrate increased levels of awareness about the negative effects of substance misuse. Regular group sessions are held at Thorn Cross Youth Offender Institution and are highly regarded.

Targeted services are available for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the Healthy Schools team support curriculum delivery to match specific needs.

61. Effective support has been developed for children and young people with parents/carers who misuse substances. This support is valued highly by young people who consider the interventions to be extremely positive and helpful; some made reference to this work as 'a lifeline' for them and 'a way to escape the chaos at home'. Workers from PHAZE helped young people plan ways of coping and enabled networking between peers who experienced similar issues at home. They expressed their frustration, however, with the level of support their parents received to address their own addictions and were disillusioned by the persistent failure of services to change their parents' behaviour. The most notable exceptions named by young people were The Relationship Centre, Footsteps and St Josephs, all voluntary agencies within the local community that work collaboratively with PHAZE and other providers to achieve the most positive outcomes. These agencies provide good, on-going support for parents and carers who are dealing with the consequences of substance misuse by their offspring, and successfully in some instances to those parents who themselves misuse drugs or alcohol, although resources are limited and therefore not always easily accessible.

62. Good progress has been made in meeting and in some instances surpassing targets. All young people referred to tier 2, 3 or 4 services negotiate a care pathway with their allocated worker at PHAZE or the appropriate provider. Numbers referred to services have increased dramatically over the last year from six in 2004/05 to 158 in 2006/07. This work is managed effectively and plans show a consistently high quality of reporting and good records of young people's responses to planned interventions and the progress made against their individual action plans.

14–19 services and provision

63. **The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for young people aged 14–19 years is good.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Strong partnership working to support the 14–19 strategy.</p> <p>Excellent achievement for 14–16 provision underpinned by effective collaborative working between schools and colleges.</p> <p>Very good achievement and success rates in the sixth form college.</p>	<p>Low take-up of work-based learning post-16.</p> <p>Insufficient involvement of work-based learning providers and the voluntary sector in the strategic development of 14–19 provision.</p> <p>Lower performance in the progress of learners post-16.</p>

<p>Good initiatives to develop the vocational curriculum.</p> <p>Good provision for permanently excluded learners.</p> <p>Measures to reduce the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment and training.</p>	
--	--

64. Well supported by the local authority and the LSC, the Warrington Association of Secondary and Special Headteachers (WASSH) group provides good strategic leadership and direction for the development of 14–19 provision, and has initiated a number of effective working groups to implement strategy, including the 14–19 Learner Entitlement Group, the Post-16 Network, and the WASSH Inclusion Cluster. Collaboration between schools, and between schools and colleges is good, leading to a much improved vocational curriculum, increased take-up and enhanced coordination of 14–19 provision, including successful submissions for diploma schemes. One of the secondary school headteachers has very recently been given a part-time (0.6) responsibility to coordinate and lead the 14–19 operational strategy, with all of the secondary schools contributing financially to the appointment. The sixth form college's partnership with schools was judged outstanding in the recent Ofsted inspection. The two local colleges are both associates of universities and work closely with them on progression.

65. The good collaborative working between schools and colleges underpins the on-going improvement of very good achievement at 14–16. The proportion of young people gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*–C is high, at 67.29% in 2006. This is significantly higher than statistical neighbours and nationally. The average point score at GCSE has been maintained at above that of statistical neighbours and nationally. Attendance is good.

66. The proportion of young people gaining five A*–C grades including English and mathematics was 49.23% in 2006, higher than both statistical neighbours and the national figure, and an increase of 1.65% over the previous year. The gap between boys and girls closed by 3% in 2006 in relation to five A*–C grades, with a further reduction predicted in 2007. The gap in achievement between schools in inner wards and those in the outer wards closed by 2.3% in 2006, and value-added data for 2004/05 showed a rising trend above the national figure.

67. The GFE college has taken constructive action in partnership with the schools to improve 14–16 provision with a particular emphasis on entry processes, and there is early evidence of positive impact. Achievement at the sixth form college is very good at all levels. The college was judged to be outstanding in March 2007 by Ofsted, with partnership with schools rated as outstanding. Subsequently the college has been awarded Learning and Skills Beacon Status. Success rates at the college have increased by 12% over the past 2 years.

68. Good initiatives have been taken recently to improve the vocational curriculum, with level 2 provision showing an increase in vocational options in secondary schools, and an increase in entry for vocational qualifications from 8% in 2004 to 15.8% in 2006. The GFE college has been re-designated as a vocational college. The new focus has been supported by a huge investment in facilities and resources which are now very good. The sixth form college has broadened its curriculum offer into vocational areas by the introduction of a range of national BTEC awards at levels 1, 2 and 3.

69. Good progress has been made in ensuring appropriate provision for excluded pupils, increasing to 92% of this group in placements in 2006/07. The curriculum provided for excluded learners is good, and attendance shows a good improvement to 71%. Warrington has a good record in maintaining low numbers of young people not in education, employment and training. The November 2006 figure of 5.8% in this category was good and below the national and regional averages. The approach of Connexions to reducing these figures is through the effective targeting of and placements offered to those at particular risk, including teenage mothers, young offenders, care leavers and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

70. Young people leaving mainstream education at 16 to enter work-based learning attain less well between the ages of 16 and 19 than their national and statistical neighbours. The council, schools and colleges have identified this issue as a priority for action. The take-up of work-based learning post-16 across the area is low. In 2006, only 1% of Year 11 leavers chose work-based learning options, a decrease of 1.1% on the previous year. Although there are good partnership arrangements between work-based learning providers, the voluntary sector and employers at an operational level, there is no representation of these sectors at a strategic level on the 14–19 agenda within the area.

Service management



Capacity to improve



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Partners engaged in imaginative and challenging ambitions, grounded in effective consultation.</p> <p>Clear outcome focus, addressing Warrington's deprivation needs.</p> <p>Resources being refocused in line with priorities.</p> <p>Strength of direction and quality of leadership.</p> <p>Strong track record, including a focus on value for money and imaginative service developments.</p> <p>Recent investment in performance management, using clear framework.</p>	<p>Clarity of other council departments' contributions to children's services in Warrington.</p> <p>Rate of progress on joint commissioning and equalities and diversity.</p> <p>Inconsistent performance management at team and unit levels, including service standards for users.</p>

72. The service and partnership are well managed, through strong leadership and direction. This supports imaginative and challenging aims set out as clear objectives to improve services for children and young people in Warrington, and to address some of the gaps between the communities and neighbourhoods in which they live. The partnership demonstrates excellent capacity to improve further and has some innovative and exemplary practice, building on clear priorities. The children's service has an excellent track record in raising achievement for young people. Joint work to improve CAMHS is having good impact, for example, and this service is showing marked improvement. The development of an imaginative family support service demonstrates joint capacity to develop new ways of working with improved outcomes for users. The overall performance of schools in the borough is outstanding with comparatively high levels of attainment and a consistent pattern of improvement. Concentrated effort to extend the impact of youth services is having considerable impact and leading to improved outcomes. The review of the Children and Young People's Plan shows that the area is highly self-critical and continually pushing boundaries for further improvement. The area is also developing performance management arrangements to ensure the delivery of children's services of the highest quality. Councillors and partners are engaged fully with these initiatives to make sure there is good capacity to underpin them.

73. Service ambition is very good, and is developing strongly through a forward-looking partnership that is clearly focused on achieving significant levels of service improvement. The partnership's vision is both ambitious and challenging, and is set out in the Children and Young People's Plan through a comprehensive set of clearly-defined aims and objectives. The inclusion of objectives in relation to emotional well-being is imaginative and demonstrates a good depth of understanding in promoting the wider Every Child Matters agenda. These ambitions enjoy strong support from councillors, who engage well with the service

and champion its agenda. The ambitions also match clearly the aims of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and the council. Together, they demonstrate a high level of shared commitment to tackling the marked gap between Warrington's affluent and deprived communities. Bridging the gap in outcomes is a primary objective of the strategic partnership and all service developments are focused on aspects of inclusion and engagement.

74. The partnership's strong commitment is demonstrated by making major shifts in service strategy to support its vision. Notable strategic changes include developing stronger preventative services and increasing the focus on children and young people's emotional support and well-being. Partner aims are being underpinned effectively by continuing structural changes, both within the council and partners. Some strong service delivery changes already demonstrate and reinforce the high quality of the partnership's aims, for example, to establish family support services to help focus on parenting skills, economic well-being and health promotion. This approach provides good evidence of the strength of ambition and sets a very firm foundation for the future. The partnership's ambition is the result of well-developed consultation, including with young people, in the local communities, in schools and through the voluntary sector. Partners have gained significantly in confidence and ownership through this approach reflecting good leadership of the overall planning process. Young people have been involved in recruitment processes and in youth services developments. However, despite commitment to make consultation more routine, it is not yet a strong feature of service strategy and business planning, and opportunities may thus be missed to provide more responsive services.

75. The partnership has a good approach to prioritisation, resulting in clear priorities that are well understood and owned, including across all the council directorates. The service is taking a thoughtful approach to the agreed plans and is re-balancing resources to improve areas of priority, such as prevention, alcohol and drug misuse, safe recruiting, and improving CAMHS. It is also maintaining and encouraging flexibility by evaluating its plan regularly in its early stages, and by using staff and partner briefings and consultation to reinforce key objectives and to explore service options. It is integrating all aspects of children's and young people's services, which strengthens the partnership's ability to sustain future service delivery.

76. The service is committed to equality and diversity, and to commissioning for quality and outcomes. These important approaches have been afforded high priority and work has been accelerated through effective leadership both within the council and partnership as a whole. This work is also giving attention to the service standards users can reasonably expect.

77. Capacity is good. The service's director and senior managers emphasise the importance of improvement through strong 'can do' leadership. This leadership attitude – and its strong support from councillors – is accelerating change, in partnerships and corporately, and offers an excellent blend of stimulus, innovation, clear direction and financial investments. This is evident in accelerating

plans for imaginative family support, for example where four new integrated centres have been set up with partners on school sites, with financial plans for further centre developments across the borough. The Warrington model contributes particularly imaginatively to local communities, as locating a central, universal service in the more deprived wards supports wider neighbourhood integration.

78. The service has an effective emphasis on value for money. It is able to build on a very good track record in achieving well for low cost, in its schools management and in delivery of services that have been assessed as good in a high percentage of its performance indicators. It is achieving well despite ineligibility for neighbourhood renewal funding. This provides a firm foundation for continuous improvement. This clarity of approach is evident in strategies for managing external funding, through clear exit strategies for funds such as Sure Start, and facilitating the shifting of resources into priority areas to ensure service continuity. It manages its assets well, and has used savings to employ additional staff and managers in priority areas in social care and substance misuse. Scrutiny is also engaged and, although councillors recognise that it could be more robust, is beginning to have impact on value for money, for example in challenging the council to engage further with the local Youth Parliament. There are good examples of joint funding arrangements to support packages of care and a good focus on securing quality placements which meet the needs of children and young people.

79. Some important capacity building is underway to further strengthen the partnership. This includes discussion on the development of joint commissioning arrangements for quality outcomes and value for money. The social care service's sickness levels are relatively high, and not all ICT systems are fully effective. The partnership has indicated it is 'on a journey' and there is still much to do to realise the ambition of fully integrated service, including more robust challenge of targets and through further development of scrutiny. Nevertheless, good progress is being made and some important shifts have been made in service balance. The council and partner organisations are investing effectively in workforce development through an organisational development and change programme that is aligned with Human Resource Management and workforce planning. This provides the foundation and structures for further innovation.

80. Performance management is adequate overall. There are some inconsistencies at team and unit level and in the setting of service standards. However, at a strategic level performance management is good, with a strong culture of joint service evaluation and measurement. The area has an accurate and reliable view of its performance. The council has invested strongly in a policy and performance unit, with several additional posts whose strong links to the corporate performance framework are helping ensure a strengthening focus on children's services across the council and with partners. High-level aims and priorities are cascaded and controlled effectively through quarterly reporting, a specialist performance board, and strong service and partner commitment to performance management. The service overall is focused on learning from existing

and comparator performance and, increasingly, from feedback from service users. Managers are driving hard to gain the views of users as a means of measuring the quality of services at the point of delivery and of ensuring the quality of practice remains consistent. A new information system is to be implemented shortly and this will enhance performance management processes at a team and unit level. There is a growing awareness in Warrington of the need to formally evaluate services as they are developed in order to measure effectiveness and impact. Formal links are being formed with universities to build a research dimension to service evaluation. Overall the service is focused on using performance management to develop the standards of all its services, and to identify strengths to build on.

81. Children's services demonstrate outstanding capacity to improve. The mix of dynamic and innovative leadership, being realised through strong partnerships and their combined resources, is already demonstrating the ability to achieve creative and effective outcomes quickly, with a notable focus on both national and local priorities. This direction and ambition has strong councillor support, and is reflected in the council's high-level aims for children and young people. The service is building on solid financial management, enabling it to support and encourage partner priorities. Clear focus and investment on organisational change, good people, and effective systems are laying firm foundations for the future. Recent senior recruits have already brought a much sharper focus on performance management, equalities and user engagement, with systems in place to accelerate these swiftly and effectively. This means Warrington is in an excellent position to continue to build stronger services.

Annex A

MOST RECENTLY PUBLISHED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (APA) OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN WARRINGTON

Summary

Warrington Borough Council consistently delivers above minimum requirements in many outcome areas. The council has responded positively to the recommendations raised in the 2006 APA and good progress has been made since that time. Outcomes for staying safe have shown good improvement; the upward trend in enjoyment and achievement has been further enhanced by improved results and progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 so that this area is now judged outstanding overall; significant steps have been taken to fully integrate education and social care services and the council has significantly strengthened its capacity to improve its services for children and young people, with a high level of commitment and enthusiasm. As a result, the overall APA judgement on capacity to improve, including the management of services, is now outstanding.

The full annual performance assessment can be found at:

http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=270350&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa_2007_877.pdf

Annex B

THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SECTION OF THE CORPORATE ASSESSMENT REPORT

1. Outcomes for most children and young people in Warrington are good and improving. Performance in respect of enjoying and achieving is outstanding and those for staying safe are good. There is good continuity of provision and focus on diversity and equality.
2. The combined work of all agencies in securing the health of children and young people is good. Information for parents and carers is available and schools are very supportive of actions to promote healthy living. Health services for looked after children are also good. CAMHS are making significant progress although further service developments are needed at tier 3. There are some exciting developments within the family support system with health professionals playing their full part in increasing the opportunities for health support and care.
3. Most children and young people appear safe and there is a good understanding across the borough of safeguarding requirements. The strong commitment to safeguarding is reflected in improved road safety measures, anti-bullying campaigns, good information for parents and carers and an effective LSCB. There is some variation in the quality of initial assessments in a few child protection cases. A new information system is being installed in January 2008. Cases on the child protection register are suitably allocated and practice appears safe.
4. Warrington has many outstanding schools enabling children and young people to enjoy and achieve well with excellent outcomes. The council is addressing issues such as surplus places in secondary schools, surplus balances and providing the necessary support to school governors and headteachers. Schools are active in the development of integrated provision in the borough with good examples of extended provision and joint working. There is a strong commitment to the inclusion of children and young people ensuring good support for the education of the most vulnerable, including looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Exclusion rates are low with good support to children and young people who are unable to attend school.
5. Provision to enable children and young people to contribute to their communities is good. Effective work by the youth service, schools, voluntary sector partners and others helps build opportunities to make a positive contribution. The youth offending team provides good quality services to prevent offending and re-offending and is actively engaged in work with the police to target particular groups in greatest need. Considerable effort is being made to tackle difficult areas such as substance misuse, sexual health and teenage pregnancy and progress in these areas is good.

6. Provision for young people to achieve economic well-being is good and there has been sustained progress in ensuring that young people are in education, employment or training. This is supported by good partnership working between the council, the LSC, the Connexions service, employers and training providers. The take-up of work-based learning post-16, particularly by females across the authority, is comparatively low. In 2006, only 1% of Year 11 leavers chose work-based learning options, a decrease of 1.1 percentage points on the previous year. The percentage of work-based learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in 2006 was also low.

7. The Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) provides a clear sense of direction. The plan is fully backed by councillors and all partner agencies. Children's services are afforded high priority. The CYPP review provides an accurate and realistic appraisal of progress to date. Priorities are clear and being implemented well by the council and its partners, although some targets and standards are not clarified. Planning in respect of equality and diversity has been comparatively slow but there is now strong and effective leadership to take this forward in more consistent ways. The Strategic Director of Children's Services and her management team provide strong, open leadership as they successfully build integrated services. Senior management capacity has been increased with the addition of a new post to strengthen performance management issues and stimulate further challenge. There is an increasing focus on engaging young people in the design and delivery of services. Capacity is good and improvement prospects are excellent.

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 Warrington 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).