

Joint area review

Oldham Children's Services Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

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Introduction

1. The most recent Annual Performance Assessment (APA) for Oldham judged the council's children's services as adequate, and its capacity to improve as good.
2. This report assesses the contribution of local services in ensuring that children and young people:
 - at risk, or requiring safeguarding are effectively cared for
 - who are looked after achieve the best possible outcomes
 - with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve the best possible outcomes.
3. The following investigations were also carried out:
 - the impact of the partners 14-19 strategy in improving outcomes for children and young people

Context

4. Oldham Borough Council covers an area of 142.2 square kilometres. It was formed following local government reorganisation in 1974 and is the amalgamation of seven former local government districts.
5. The population is growing and is predicted to rise by 4%, to 228,100 people in 2022. The borough currently has a younger age profile than the majority of England, with a higher proportion under the age of 19 (25.1%) and lower proportions of people aged 65 and over. The Black and minority ethnic population is increasing, in particular the numbers of Pakistani and Bangladeshi people who are living in Oldham. The proportion of Oldham's Black and minority ethnic community is forecast to increase from 16.6% in 2007 to 19.4% in 2012 and 24.6% in 2022. Currently approximately three out of 10 children under the age of 15 are from these communities. This number is predicted to increase to four out of 10 by 2022. The number of Eastern European migrant workers is also increasing.
6. Economic deprivation is increasing in Oldham. In 2007, Oldham was the 42nd most deprived of the 354 local authority areas in England (based on the average scores in 2007) and the 23rd most deprived in terms of local concentration of deprivation. Those living in Oldham's central wards experience particularly high levels of deprivation. In 2007, the three central wards of Coldhurst, St Mary's and Werneth were placed in the bottom 1% of the national table. In July 2007, the unemployment rate in Oldham was 4.1% compared to the national average of 3.1%. Significantly, ward level unemployment rates show a large variation, from 1% in Saddleworth to 14% in Coldhurst.

7. Oldham Borough Council is the main provider of children's social care. Services are provided through 142 foster carers, three children's residential homes, two children's residential homes commissioned from the private sector, eight field social work teams, incorporating the family support teams and an after-care team. Services to children and young people who are at risk of offending, or who have offended, are provided through Positive Steps Oldham a charitable trust. There are no young offenders institutions in the area.
8. Pre-16 education is provided through 103 voluntary and private early years settings, 61 maintained nursery schools and classes, six Children's Centres, 79 primary schools, 15 secondary schools, four special schools and one Pupil Referral Unit.
9. Post-16 education and training is provided by four secondary schools with sixth forms, one general further education college, one sixth form college and five locally based work-based learning providers. In addition, a range of other national and regional providers deliver work-based learning programmes.
10. Entry to Employment (E2E) provision is managed by the Learning and Skills Council and delivered through The Oldham College, North Lancashire (Lancs) Training Group, YMCA Training and Rathbones. In 2006/07, 499 learners accessed this provision.
11. Family learning is delivered by Oldham Borough Council and Highway to Opportunities.
12. Educational and recreational leisure time activities, including youth work, are provided through Oldham Borough Council.
13. Oldham Primary Care Trust (PCT) commissions all healthcare for children, families and young people across the whole of Oldham. Primary care and community health services are provided by the PCT. Pennine Acute Hospitals' Trust provides services for children and young people, including acute services and in-patient paediatric beds. Pennine Care NHS Trust provides mental health services for children and young people in the area.

Main Findings

14. The main findings for this joint area review are as follows:
 - Arrangements for safeguarding children and young people are good. Strong leadership and focus in children's social care has brought about improvements in both service provision and outcomes for children and young people in need or requiring safeguarding. Partnership working on safeguarding issues is strong and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is working effectively.

- Outcomes for looked after children are good. The majority of children and young people who are looked after are well cared for and receive good multi-agency support. They have very good involvement in the evaluation and planning of services provided for them. The council fulfils its corporate parenting responsibilities well. Looked after children have very good opportunities to contribute to service planning.
- Services make an adequate contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Early identification and assessment of need is good and multi-agency working is effective. The health needs of these children and young people are well met. However, the inclusion strategy is underdeveloped and funding allocation to schools lacks clarity. Target setting and the measuring of progress for most children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are insufficiently rigorous.
- The impact of local authority initiatives and the 14-19 strategy on outcomes for young people aged 14-19 are good. The 14-19 partnership has ensured the development of a broad and balanced curriculum for young people. Provision is collaborative and joint working good. Vocational learning opportunities are broad and there are good progression routes. A wide range of well-targeted programmes are effectively engaging vulnerable young people and raising their aspirations, attainment and progression.
- Overall service management across the partnership and the capacity to improve are adequate. A good Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) has community cohesion and the tackling of inequalities and racism as a central strand of its ambition. Consultation with children and young people is strong. However, effective performance management and systems to deliver value for money across the partnership are not in place. The council is currently facing financial difficulties and the impact of potential cuts is unclear.

Grades

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

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

Recommendations

For immediate action

The local partnership should:

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

For action over the next six months

- Accelerate the pace of the implementation of the Every Child Matters agenda, in particular locality working and the consistent use of the Common Assessment Framework.
- Establish processes to analyse and measure the impact of service delivery on outcomes across the Children Young People and Families directorate (CYPFD) and partners.
- Develop a medium term financial plan and processes to identify value for money to accompany the CYPP in order to ensure its sustainability.
- Implement the systems for monitoring the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in all mainstream schools and strengthen the challenge offered by School Improvement Partners in this area.
- Complete and implement the special educational needs review and supporting inclusion strategy.

- Develop and implement processes that clearly monitor and report on the exclusions of looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

For action over in the longer term

- Take action to improve the attainment of vulnerable groups aged 14-19, in particular the attainment of five A*-C GCSE's including English and mathematics.

Equality and diversity

15. The council and its partners take a strong lead role in promoting equality, diversity and community cohesion. There is a particularly strong lead for this within the CYPFD. There is wide and active commitment from all local partners on the shared priorities within the CYPP of 'narrowing the gap' and strengthening community cohesion.

16. Several successful initiatives, such as the youth service's Fusion Project, have raised young people's understanding of different cultures and backgrounds. Recently developed workshops in schools on racist behaviour and the established Shared Future Programme help young people challenge prejudice. Oldham Community Health Services, part of Oldham PCT, run healthy living programmes that aim to tackle obesity and improve the long-term health of children and young people. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those from a wide range of backgrounds are encouraged to take part in Ability Sports road shows and a range of other sporting and cultural activities.

17. There is good practice in the robust monitoring and reporting of racist incidents in schools and outcomes are reported weekly to a forum led by the police. International festival days are used effectively to help young people tackle homophobia. Many projects successfully engage harder to reach and more vulnerable young people. Their creative work is celebrated through the making of films and in public performances. These young people feel they are able to express their views and are listened to. There is informative guidance for schools on matters such as Ramadan, international naming systems and effective support for the use of first languages. Schools and colleges are inclusive and offer extensive support to children and young people with additional needs.

18. The fundamental and supportive role of parents and families is recognised, and they are enabled to participate in or observe their children's activities. Equality champions in each department of the local authority play a key role in improving self-assessment and staff development. The local authority is making good progress in extending its use of targets to assess how well it promotes equality and diversity and makes good use of data to measure participation by particular groups. Community cohesion initiatives are very strong and there is much sharing of good practice between partners and with

other local authorities. There is good collaboration with voluntary, community and faith organisations in developing the equality agenda.

Safeguarding



19. The contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children at risk or requiring safeguarding is good.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good range of family support and early intervention provision.</p> <p>Good improvement in the social care assessment and safeguarding service.</p> <p>A strong LSCB with excellent governance arrangements that undertakes innovative work.</p> <p>Excellent partnership working to support young women at risk of sexual exploitation.</p> <p>Good action to reduce the rates of teenage pregnancy.</p> <p>Effective multi-agency action to prevent anti-social behaviour and offending.</p>	<p>Results of case file monitoring are not systematically monitored and analysed.</p> <p>Slow progress towards implementing the Common Assessment Framework.</p>

20. The 2007 APA judged safeguarding arrangements to be adequate. Significant investment and increased capacity in front-line social care services, has improved the quality of provision. Numbers of repeat referrals and re-registrations have been reduced. The timeliness of initial and core assessments has greatly improved.

21. A good range of preventive services is provided for children and young people of all ages, including older young people. Early intervention and prevention is well embedded. Children's centres, early years services and extended schools are well aligned to ensure efficient, joined up service delivery which is well tailored to meet community needs. The One Front Door Early Intervention Programme robustly tracks multi-agency interventions. Staff from all agencies including schools and the voluntary and community sector have been well trained in the use of the Common Assessment Framework. Sound co-

ordination and data management arrangements are in place. However, the use of the Common Assessment Framework in practice is variable, and implementation has been slow. The council has recognised this and has taken action to accelerate implementation through the appointment of local coordinators.

22. Schools regularly consult with students on internal anti-bullying policies and these are frequently updated to reflect good practice. Young people are knowledgeable about what to do and where to go if they have a problem and those seen during the inspection were able to explain to inspectors how their experiences of bullying had been tackled positively. Good local initiatives and innovative practice to raise awareness include a project to combat homophobic bullying and the "No place for racism campaign". However, the anti-bullying strategy has only recently been developed and consultation with young people is yet to take place.

23. Significant improvements have been made to the council's social care services. Duty systems are particularly well resourced and managed. Processes for gathering information and tracking work are robust and good attention is paid to informing referrers and parents of the outcome of assessments. The contact and assessment service has made good efforts to meet the needs of the local Black and minority ethnic community through the appointment of language workers from the local area. This has resulted in improved community engagement and communication. Social care performance indicators for 2007/08 are now generally in line with, or better than, similar authorities. Good action has been taken to reduce the number of repeat referrals from 36.2% in 2005/06, to 29.2% in 2006/07. These are now broadly in line with similar areas. Numbers of initial assessments completed within seven days have risen well from 68% to 84%. In the same period there was a significant improvement in numbers of core assessments completed within timescales from 64% to 85%. In both instances performance is better than in similar areas.

24. Good levels of multi-agency support are provided to children in need on both a short-term and a longer-term basis. Their cases are regularly reviewed ensuring appropriate use of resources. This includes vulnerable 16-17 year olds who make up almost 20% of the After Care team's work. Arrangements for the transfer of work between teams are effective and prompt.

25. Assessment and planning for children at risk is robust and all child protection cases are allocated to a qualified social worker. Assessments and child protection reports, including those seen at random, were of a good standard. Whilst the council has a higher number of children with a protection plan compared to similar areas, activity is carefully monitored and analysed. Evidence suggests that thresholds are appropriate. The emergency duty service takes an effective role in safeguarding. Multi-agency participation, including the involvement of adult mental health services, is strong. Good attention is paid to the engagement of parents and carers. The council has been effective in

reducing number of children requiring a further child protection plan from 20.5% to 8.9%.

26. Recent recruitment drives have been successful and social care workloads are manageable. Staff are well supported by managers at all levels and have good access to learning and development opportunities. Case files are regularly and frequently monitored by managers, however this information is not systematically collated to provide senior managers with an overview of the quality of work.

27. Some historical safeguarding concerns were identified in the recent inspection of the Youth Offending Service in relation to the quality of management oversight. Emerging vulnerabilities for some service users were not routinely identified. These issues have now been addressed.

28. The LSCB is effective and highly regarded by partner agencies. The Board reports to an executive group of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) which is an excellent governance arrangement, ensuring robust and prompt communications. It has an independent chair, is well resourced and is developing a performance management framework. The broader safeguarding agenda has been embraced well. The Oldham Safeguarding Compact provides a benchmark for organisations to illustrate that they are working towards safeguarding children and is an example of good practice in this respect. Staff from all agencies have access to comprehensive training. The readily available e-learning module is supporting increased awareness of child abuse and neglect. Over the last 12 months, 488 individuals from a wide range of agencies, including 98 from faith and wider voluntary groups, have participated in this.

29. The Local Authority Designated Officer is working effectively in partnership with local communities to deliver high quality, safe recruitment training. Work through the local mosque project and other initiatives are effectively raising awareness of child protection within Black and minority ethnic communities. The Messenger Project for young women who have been sexually exploited is an example of excellent partnership working for an extremely vulnerable group. It effectively tackles potentially sensitive issues through very strong collaborative working with the local mosques, schools, children's services and the police. There are good operational links with the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that children's services are represented on the strategic management board. However, the MAPPA is not referred to in the 2007/08 LSCB annual report.

30. A high priority is given to safe recruitment. Criminal Records Bureau and List 99 checks have been completed in line with requirements. Clear advice is given to schools about their responsibilities with regard to vetting, in particular with regard to those from whom they commission services. There have been no serious case reviews in the last two years and scrupulous attention has been

paid to ensuring that decision-making is correct. The LSCB demonstrates a strong commitment to continuous improvement by comparing their work with two neighbouring councils. Arrangements, for the monitoring of all child deaths, shared with two neighbouring councils are in place.

31. Services for children who are privately fostered are well managed and comply with requirements. Placements known to the council, including those of teenage Bengali children, have increased from 10 in 2006/07 to 16 in 2007/08 and the council has responded well to improve the information available for Bengali parents and carers.

32. The council and the PCT work well in partnership to provide good quality health related services. These are readily available through the work of the children's centres and Positive Steps, which provides accessible and immediate help for older young people through a one-stop-shop. There is good engagement in the National Healthy Schools programme with 69% of schools having achieved Healthy Schools status, and 95% participating, which is better than similar areas. Teenage parents receive particularly good support; the partnership has reduced the rate of teenage pregnancy by 32.8% from the baseline which is above the 28.3% expected reduction. A fully comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is in place. Emotional health promotion, prevention and early intervention is strong including input from a specialist mental health practitioner for school nurses. This work, in conjunction with the Choice and Partnership referral system, has had a positive impact in reducing numbers referred for specialist appointments as the latest validated data shows that significantly fewer children waited for an appointment longer than four weeks than is the case nationally.

33. Good arrangements, underpinned by appropriate policies, are in place to monitor and track those children without a school place and/or who are missing. Tracking is robust and links are made with common assessment and social care processes where appropriate. A dedicated worker ensures continuity and regularity of support for home educated children. Additional support is readily available and parents are well supported in decision-making.

34. Domestic abuse has a high priority within the Greater Manchester police force and there are well established and responsive systems in place, including within the social care duty service. A good range of services is available to support children in families who have experienced abuse, including direct work with these children. An ambitious and comprehensive domestic abuse strategy is currently being reviewed. However, the impact of this work is not sufficiently measured.

35. A proactive approach is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour. Operation Owl, a project set up to reduce alcohol fuelled youth related crime, is an example of good practice. This initiative has had a clear impact on the volume and seriousness of incidents and crimes recorded and further work is underway to act on what has been learned. Effective multi-agency working, including the

Prevent and Deter approach has been successful in reducing first-time offending. However, the rate of re-offending is 4% higher than in similar areas. In 2007/08, there were 30% fewer first-time entrants to the youth justice system than similar authorities. A specialist resettlement team provides improved support to those subject to custodial sentences and who are subject to repeated custody, recall and licence.

Looked after children and young people



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good range of actions to reduce the number of looked after children and young people.</p> <p>Looked after children and young people receive good care from well trained and supported staff and carers.</p> <p>Most looked after children live in high quality and stable fostering placements.</p> <p>Effective multi-agency care planning and support.</p> <p>Very good opportunities for consultation and participation in service planning.</p>	<p>Monitoring and evaluation is insufficiently focussed on impact and outcomes.</p> <p>The quality assurance role of the independent reviewing officers is underdeveloped.</p> <p>Recent increase in exclusions from school.</p>

37. A comprehensive range of resources are provided for children on the edge of care, including Family Group Meetings and the recently strengthened Intensive Support Team. Between September 2007 and August 2008 this team offered effective support to 30 young people at significant risk of entering care, enabling 23 of them to remain at home. Over the last year targeted action also ensured that 25 children were discharged from care orders or made subject to special guardianship. Numbers adopted from care have risen well. In 2007/08, 10.8%, compared to 8.7% in similar areas, were adopted. The number of looked after children at 61.3 per 10,000 is just lower than similar areas (62.8).

Decision-making in relation to whether children are received into care is rigorous.

38. Looked after children are well cared for. Children and care leavers seen during the inspection say they feel safe, valued and particularly well supported on a day-to-day basis. Inspectors saw examples of sensitive and responsive work. All looked after children and care leavers are supervised by qualified social workers. They have a good understanding of how to report concerns and access independent advocacy. When young people go missing from care staff respond proactively.

39. The needs of looked after children are well prioritised in the CYPP, including the tracking of three and four year olds to ensure their access to nursery education grant funding. The quality of provision has been significantly improved. Regulatory inspection judged the fostering service to be inadequate in 2004 and outstanding in 2008. The council is effectively managing fostering services to provide increased local places. Outcomes have improved and all are now in line with or better than similar areas. Performance against national indicators is well monitored but local indicators are not in place and outcomes, for example in relation to substance misuse, are not systematically analysed. The quality assurance and monitoring role of independent reviewing officers is underdeveloped.

40. Most children live in stable family placements. Around 71% of those looked after for at least two and a half years have lived in the same placement, compared to 67.4% in similar areas. Targeted recruitment of foster carers, especially for family groups and Bangladeshi children, has a strong focus and is well placed to recruit 15 additional carers by March 2009. Although overall placements are sufficient to meet demand, there is a shortage of temporary placements for children of Asian backgrounds. The most recent adoption inspection found the service to be good. Robust action has been taken to improve the quality of care in some children's homes, including those contracted from an external provider, and recent inspections now judge most provision to be good.

41. Multi-agency care planning and information sharing is effective. A wide range of health and learning support is accessible through the Life Chances Team. Good efforts are made to meet racial, cultural and linguistic needs and to ensure that children and young people remain in contact with their wider family. The quality of care and pathway plans is satisfactory and they are soundly reviewed, although records of meetings are not always efficiently distributed. The overwhelming majority of children and young people contribute to their reviews. This has improved significantly from 84% in 2006/07 to 98% in 2007/08 and is now better than in similar areas. However, the range of methods to support participation in reviews is limited.

42. Strong attention is paid to increasing immunisations and improving timely access to health assessments and dental treatment. Numbers of health assessments are in line with similar areas. However, systematic monitoring of quality is at an early stage. Individualised oral health promotion for those in children's homes and care leavers has been of particular benefit. Good quality multi-agency health promotion, such as the accredited and holistic Passport4health completed by 21 young people across the service, is developing well. Emotional and behavioural needs are particularly well responded to through the specialist counsellor and psychologists. Access to specialist CAMHS is timely.

43. In 2006/07, attainment at all key stages was adequate overall. Council data shows an increase in numbers sitting GCSE's. In 2006/07, nine out of 17 looked after young people sat GCSE examinations. Eight obtained one A* to G grade, and four obtained five A* to G grades. In 2007/08, 33 out of 35 young people sat GCSEs. Young people not entered for examinations, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, have access to a wide and well tailored range of accredited alternative provision. The local authority has recognised that too few personal education plans (PEPs) are up-to-date and has taken firm action to improve their quality. Local monitoring and analysis indicates that there is much improvement in the quality of the most recent PEPs.

44. Very good progress has been made in developing a virtual school. Attainment of school age children is robustly tracked, and well targeted programmes are implemented. Recent initiatives, such as the well established volunteer reading scheme and the 'It's cool to succeed' programme, are very well conceived and have had a positive impact on confidence, motivation and engagement. However, it is too soon to judge the impact on the 2007/08 educational outcomes. A good number of young adults (eight) are well supported at university. A wide range of local leisure activities are available. Carers and volunteers from the sports development service provide extra staffing capacity for these activities to ensure as many children and young people as possible participate.

45. Attendance of looked after children is in line with similar areas. Improving this is a key priority and it is regularly monitored. Multi-agency action to prevent exclusion is timely. Despite this, fixed-term and permanent exclusions have recently increased and looked after children are three times more likely than other children in Oldham to be excluded from school. Strong partnership working through the Pupil Referral Unit is providing high quality alternatives. Those who offend are known, protocols have been strengthened and sound efforts are being made to use a restorative justice approach.

46. A wide range of creative and innovative accredited projects offer very good opportunities for consultation and participation. The extended schools consultation included young people from foster care and offered the opportunity to work with media professionals to produce a DVD. Well-

established corporate parenting takes good account of the views of the Children in Care Council whose members report a significant increase in their confidence, sense of achievement and work related skills. Services have also improved as a result of their involvement. Looked after young people make an effective contribution to the Youth Council. The lead councillor has a good understanding of the statutory responsibilities of the council. Councillors actively respond to regular information about national performance and most receive appropriate training.

47. Care leavers receive good multi-agency support, for example universal health support from the specialist team at Positive Steps Oldham. Those seen speak highly of their involvement in pathway planning and their progress is effectively tracked. Care leavers are routinely involved in developing the after care service. A broad and good quality range of accommodation enables most to make a gradual transition towards full independence, although there is a shortage of suitable local emergency accommodation. Sound targeted attention such as the DRIVE project, helps care leavers find education, employment or training and the overwhelming majority of 2008 school leavers have an appropriate placement.

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Strong partnership working with the PCT and other health agencies.</p> <p>The range and quality of post-16 provision.</p> <p>Effective joint working of the co-located PCT Child Development Team and the local authority's Children with Disabilities Team.</p> <p>Particularly high quality facilities in special schools.</p>	<p>Slow progress by the local authority and its partners in developing the strategic special educational needs framework and inclusion strategy.</p> <p>Insufficient monitoring of the progress of pupils at School Action and School Action Plus by the local authority.</p> <p>High numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training.</p>

<p>Outstanding opportunities to access and participate in sporting activities.</p> <p>Good arrangements for palliative care.</p>	<p>High number of fixed-term exclusions from secondary schools.</p> <p>The use of the Pupil Referral Unit for long-term placements of children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.</p>
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49. Comprehensive early years work is provided through children's centres. Processes to identify and support very young children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their families are good. A multi-agency programme of support ensures children are able to maximise their potential and access learning. Highly effective collaborative working ensures that all agencies receive timely information about children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In September 2008 almost all children joining a reception class with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were already known to early years providers.

50. Health provision for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. Partnership working between the local authority, voluntary organisations, the PCT and other health agencies is strong. Co-location of the local authority Children with Disabilities Team and the PCT Child Development team effectively supports joint working and innovative service development. Transition Workers employed by the PCT provide good support to Special Educational Needs Coordinators to ensure that health needs are fully considered in annual review and transition planning.

51. Appropriate pathways for those with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder are in place and practitioners provide a good range of accessible provision. Capacity issues in the therapeutic services have been tackled through innovative workforce planning. The local authority funds three speech and language therapist posts within the PCT team to build capacity in special and mainstream schools across all phases. The main focus is on improving communication skills to support pupils to access the curriculum. A hard to fill community paediatric consultant post has been replaced by two nurse consultants to support case management. However, there are too few occupational therapists, and parents and carers seen during the inspection report that they experience long waiting times.

52. Arrangements for palliative care are good. Provision is flexible, family centred and of a good quality. Two local hospices offer outreach services and the PCT guarantees end-of-life care at home when this is requested. The council is working with other local authorities in the North East Greater Manchester conurbation to pool palliative care arrangements to provide a sub-regional offer. Specialist nurses who provide advice, support and training to schools, effectively enable children with long-term medical needs such as asthma and diabetes to attend school.

53. Safeguarding for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is fully understood and well managed. Child in need and child protection work is of a high quality and is undertaken by well-trained and supported specialist social workers. Case file review shows prompt and appropriate responses to young people presenting inappropriate sexual behaviour. Good support is currently enabling 45 children and young people to access direct payments. However, the needs of parents and carers are not routinely separately assessed and reviewed. All those appointed using direct payments are required to undergo criminal record checks.

54. Short break provision is adequate and provided through a residential facility and the Family Link scheme where foster carers offer short breaks to 17 children and young people in their own homes. A new voluntary sector organisation is beginning to meet the support needs of children and young people who wish to attend out-of-school activities. The local authority is currently recruiting a co-ordinator to manage its Aiming Higher programme but planning for this project is under-developed.

55. The statutory assessment process is thorough and efficient and includes home visits by a member of the special educational needs team during the preparation of the application for assessment and after the panel meeting, to explain the outcome and next steps. All new statements are completed within timescales, are well written and contain detailed information. Whilst the council is effectively ensuring that the number of new statements issued remains low, and below the national average, new statements are inappropriately being issued for older young people to secure continued funding for additional support in post-16 education.

56. The council and its partners are committed to ensuring that children and young people with complex needs are provided with the best placement possible. In line with government policy, emphasis is placed on maintaining social and family networks, which leads to local placements being preferred. However, parents and carers expressed concern that this consideration might override educational and health needs and that in this respect their wishes are not always fully considered.

57. The council has been slow to take the lead in developing a strategic framework for educational provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The inclusion strategy and special educational needs funding formula are underdeveloped. A review of funding and the provision of education is currently underway, with all head teachers actively engaged in the review of educational provision. Positive actions, such as the introduction of Individualised Pupil Intervention funding to meet the needs of pupils at School Action and School Action Plus have already been introduced for 2008/09.

58. Approximately 1% of pupils are educated in the local authority's special schools, the Pupil Referral Unit and in out-of-borough provision. The leadership of these particularly well equipped local authority schools is inspiring and

visionary. The most recent Ofsted inspections judged one of these schools, and the Pupil Referral Unit, to be outstanding. Children and young people are provided with innovative learning opportunities, supported by particularly good access to therapists and other support services. Teaching and support staff provide good support to mainstream settings, to enable the development of staff skills and confidence and to increase integration. Young people with statements identifying social and emotional behaviour needs are currently being educated on a long-term basis in the Pupil Referral Unit. Plans are in place for new discrete secondary provision within the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme.

59. The educational achievement of children and young people is adequate. Although attainment is improving, outcomes remain below the national average for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. For example, in the five-year period 2002 to 2007 attainment of all pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at English Level 5+ rose from 11% to 27% compared to the 2007 national average of 34%. Special schools monitor progress well at individual child level, with clear, individual, challenging targets being set and reviewed frequently. The council's monitoring of the progress of pupils with special educational needs at all levels in its mainstream schools is developing. P scale data (which tracks the progress of pupils working below National Curriculum levels) was collected for the first time from all primary schools in 2007. Whilst this data is used to monitor the individual progress of pupils, it is not yet used consistently by the council and the School Improvement Partners to drive up the performance of all pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In 2006, the proportion of secondary school pupils with statements of special educational need who had fixed-term exclusions was 9.39% higher than similar authorities. Unauthorised absence among year 11 pupils with learning difficulties and or disabilities is rising. For example, at School Action Plus it rose from 5.3% in 2006/07 to 8.5% in 2007/08.

60. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have wide-ranging opportunities to participate in leisure and cultural activities. Opportunities to participate in sporting activities are outstanding. Those talented at sport are supported to work towards Paralympic participation. Other young people are supported to gain sports coaching and leadership qualifications and to support the delivery of sports activities through paid employment. The participation of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in youth service provision is very high. The service has very good information about individuals and makes every effort to contact them and involve them in activities.

61. Young people receive good advice from the Connexions service about post-16 opportunities. Transition planning is effective and begins in Year 9 with the involvement of appropriate agencies, including social care. The Transition Working Group focuses on smoothing the move from children's to adult social care. The two colleges and local and national work-based learning providers offer a wide range of high quality post-16 provision. However, parents and

carers report that there is less choice for 19 to 25 year olds with severe learning difficulties and complex needs. In 2006/07, the numbers of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who were not in education, employment or training was 7% higher than nationally and 2% higher than similar authorities. Young people with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are over represented in this group.

62. The Parent Partnership provides appropriate advice, support and training, primarily on education issues, though not all parents and families are sufficiently aware of the service. Parents are consulted about services through questionnaires, although feedback is not systematic.

Other issues identified for further investigation

Additional investigation: The impact of local authority initiatives and the 14-19 strategy on outcomes for young people aged 14-19

63. The impact of local authority initiatives and the 14-19 strategy on outcomes for young people aged 14-19 is good.

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Particularly good post-16 success rates in the colleges.</p> <p>Particularly good support through the Junior University and Young Professionals to raise young people's attainment and aspirations.</p> <p>Extensive range of effective 14–16 collaborative provision.</p> <p>Successful projects, including the youth service, which improve participation by and progression for vulnerable young people.</p> <p>Good information, advice and guidance services and support for learners.</p> <p>Effective 14-19 strategy to raise participation and reduce the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training.</p>	<p>Low attainment of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grade A* - C including English and mathematics.</p> <p>The high levels of particular groups of young people not in education, employment or training including young people from particular wards, young White males and young people with learning difficulties or disabilities.</p> <p>Overall attainment of Level 2 and 3 qualifications at the age of 19.</p>

64. The 14–19 strategy accurately identifies the issues and challenges facing the borough. It has the full support of key partners and stakeholders who are signed up to its vision, aims and actions. The 14-19 Strategy, "Building a Shared Future" was revised in 2007 and is recognised as an example of good practice by Ofsted. Implementation of the strategy is through a 14-19 Strategic Partnership Group, which reports to the Children's Trust. Oldham's 14-19 Education Plan 2008-2011 has clear priorities for improvement. The 14–19 strategy group involves all stakeholders and regularly reviews progress towards measurable targets. The group have agreed an area based delivery plan to deliver the full range of curriculum pathways and diplomas by 2013. The strong collaborative partnership and shared commitment to raising participation in higher education helped secure the establishment of University College Oldham.

65. Recent inspections of Oldham College and Oldham Sixth Form College judged both to be outstanding in ensuring the curriculum meets the needs and interests of learners and in employer responsiveness. The colleges offer a wide range of vocational learning opportunities and provision in schools is growing. Social and educational inclusion is judged outstanding in both colleges. A Diploma Gateway agreement and delivery plan is in place. Two diplomas (Creative and Media and Construction and the Built Environment), started in September 2008 and have recruited well. An Engineering diploma is scheduled for 2009 with further subjects including finance planned for 2010. The partnership recognises the need to continue its work to engage employers.

66. An extensive range of 14–16 collaborative provision involving over 500 young people has developed through good partnerships between the local authority, schools, colleges and other vocational providers. Vocational pathways cover all subject sector areas and provide for a wide range of abilities. The Oldham College has around 300 Key Stage 4 pupils attending courses in 18 vocational options at the college. Around 170 learners attend E2E programmes and the college works with 14 partners to deliver Train to Gain opportunities for 1400 learners. Oldham Sixth Form College offers extensive GCE A and AS level provision and an effective programme of Level 2 courses with high progression rates to Level 3. Links between both colleges and 11-16 partner high schools are very effective in promoting progression post-16. Schools have developed a wide range of in-house vocational provision. Good collaboration between the two colleges avoids duplication of provision for post-16 learners.

67. Well-targeted projects are effective in engaging and raising aspirations, attainment and progression for many vulnerable groups. The learning on most alternative programmes is responsive, flexible and designed to meet personal needs. The excellent support from learning mentors from the Junior University is successfully helping increasing numbers of young people in schools achieve higher grades, particularly in English and mathematics GCSEs, and to progress to further education. In many cases the proportion of this group who enter further education, employment or training is higher than the authority average. Alternative curriculum projects, such as the film and media project run by Street College, encourage disengaged and vulnerable young people back into

education and training. Oldham youth service provides a range of targeted projects offering alternative awards and specific programmes for young people disengaged from school. It aims to increase young people's self-esteem and develop their personal and social skills. For many young people this provides their first opportunity to gain an accredited outcome and it can lead to more positive engagement in school.

68. The proportion of school leavers who achieve five GCSE passes at grades A*-C has continued to improve faster than nationally but remains just below the national average. When this includes English and mathematics the gap, at 5%, is much greater. Although in some schools rates have improved, in others they have declined. In 2007, seven schools were below the national floor targets for this measure. The local authority expects three of these schools to reach the targets in 2008.

69. Success rates for students at both colleges are good. At vocational Levels 1 and 2 they are above the national rate, and particularly good given that significant numbers of students have low prior levels of ability in English or mathematics. Outcomes for E2E learners and apprentices are good. Attainment and pass rates at GCE AS and A-level in the sixth form college are very good and many learners achieve much higher grades than predicted by their GCSE scores. Both colleges are particularly successful in attracting learners from under-represented groups. Success rates by learners receiving additional learning support, and from most black and minority ethnic groups, in both colleges, are at the same levels as their peer groups. The proportion of young people achieving Levels 2 and 3 qualifications by age 19 is below the national average but in line with that of similar authorities.

70. The proportion of young people aged 16–18 in education, employment and training improved by 5% in 2007, bringing it in line with statistical neighbours. Figures for March 2008 indicate that this trend is continuing. Participation rates for Black and minority ethnic students are high. Participation of teenage mothers in education, employment or training is particularly good. In 2006/07, 42.3% were engaged in education, employment or training, compared to the national figure of 30.3%. Increasing numbers of learners have completed apprenticeships. The Aim Higher programme of initiatives is particularly effective in raising aspirations and attainment for a wide range of learners aged 14-19. Progression to higher levels and higher education is good and increasing. Retention rates of 17 year olds have improved well, and the gap between area and national figures reduced to 2% in 2006.

71. The school improvement service provides appropriate challenge and support in raising attainment at Key Stage 4. Improvements have been made in the numbers achieving five A*-C grades at GCSE, and in 2006/07 60.21% pupils attained five A* to C compared to the national figure of 60.81%. However, in this same year, the numbers achieving five or more GCSEs at A*-C including English and mathematics remained 5% below the national average. Successful strategies to raise attainment are shared well between schools and

include nationally recognised good practice in tracking the progress of vulnerable pupils. A rigorous approach to improving attendance is in place and has led to good improvements including by most groups of vulnerable young people. However, attendance for pupils in year 11 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities remains low. Well-developed procedures between schools and the Pupil Referral Unit support the reintegration of children into mainstream schools.

72. Guidance and support for learners is good. The on-line District Prospectus is comprehensive, up-to-date and easily accessible. Colleges offer outstanding guidance and support which is tailored to students' individual needs. Oldham College has exemplary arrangements to support students moving from school to college through link courses, transition visits and pre-course information and tasters. Integrated arrangements for information, advice and guidance are available for all learners. Positive Steps Oldham, through its Connexions personal advisers, has well established partnerships with secondary schools. Support and advice given to vulnerable groups including those not in education, employment or training is good. Schools and colleges supplement this support through careers education programmes and work experience. In 2007, Oldham had the 13th highest 'September Guarantee' rate in England. This guarantee reflects the numbers of school leavers receiving an offer of education, employment or training by 30 September. In Oldham this was 97.5% against a national average of 88%.

73. Initiatives to reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training are successful. The strategy is well supported by all partners and robust action has resulted in yearly improvements, including a significant reduction in the numbers of young people with unknown destinations. In 2007/08 this was 4% compared to 6.5% in similar authorities and 5.6% nationally. Borough-wide resources are targeted at vulnerable groups, and include support for the development of pre-E2E programmes. However, rates have fluctuated for particular groups including teenage parents, young offenders, care leavers and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Service Management



Capacity to improve



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Strong focus on raising the aspirations of children, young people and families.</p> <p>Clear understanding of the importance of the relationship between raising educational attainment and regeneration, well-being and community cohesion.</p> <p>Ownership of the children and young people's agenda by the Oldham Partnership through the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreements (LAA).</p> <p>Good involvement of children and young people in setting ambitions and priorities.</p> <p>Good progress on a workforce development strategy.</p>	<p>Resources for the CYPP 2008-11 are not fully identified.</p> <p>Strategic planning, financial medium-term planning and performance management are insufficiently robust.</p> <p>Lack of pace for some important strategies.</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation of the impact of provision, including analysis of value for money, is insufficiently developed.</p>

75. Service management is adequate with adequate capacity to improve further. Commitment to fulfilling the ambitions for children and young people is strong within the council and partner organisations. However, financial capacity within the council faces significant challenges and medium-term financial planning and analysis of value for money is insufficient both within the council and across the Changing for Children Partnership (CfC). The pace of development of the Children's Trust has been slow. However, new structures and systems recently implemented have improved both capacity and accountability across the Partnership.

76. Ambition for children and young people in Oldham is good. The council and its partner organisations provide effective leadership for raising the aspirations of children, young people and families. This is combined with a clear

understanding of the importance of the relationship between raising educational attainment and regeneration, well-being and community cohesion.

77. The relationship of the CYPP 2008-11 to LAA targets is robust and there is a shared responsibility for children and young people across the LSP, the Oldham Partnership, through the Sustainable Community Strategy. This includes the good practice of direct reporting to the LSP from the LSCB. Therefore, the ownership of ambitions rightly belongs to the borough, not only to services delivering directly to children and young people. CYPP issues are clearly embedded in the council's Citizens' Plan, 2008-11, and in a cross-cutting manner across Safe and Strong Communities, Economic Prosperity and Health and Well-being LAA blocks, with specific targets for 2008/09. There has been a thorough review of the CYPP 2007 to inform the new plan. Equalities and diversity are well considered, with a shared focus on reducing inequalities.

78. The involvement of children and young people at a strategic level is strong overall, through the Youth Council, the Positive Steps Oldham Board and the Children in Care Council. Local projects such as Kickstart and Street College are effective in engaging the hard to reach. The CYPP needs analysis was particularly well informed by extensive consultation with children and young people. However, parents were insufficiently involved at this strategic level. Plans are in place to create a Parents Forum. However, currently there is no strategy to develop parental involvement and the Active Involvement Strategy for children and young people is only just being developed. Whilst some parents are involved in consultation and implementation at a strategic level through the Service Delivery Partnerships, this engagement is limited.

79. Prioritisation is adequate. The 'Oldham Six' priorities for children and young people have been appropriately identified in the CYPP, supported by a measurable one year delivery plan with targets and milestones. They aptly reflect national priorities within the local context. Targets to support their delivery are also clearly interwoven in the council's Citizens' Plan. However, resources are not identified fully across all partners and financial plans only cover one year, making the sustainability of the delivery of the Plan unclear, particularly within a context of significant financial challenges for the council. The council has rightly directed resources to priorities including £1m to the priority of staying safe, through Operation Messenger, which targets young women at risk of sexual exploitation, and an additional £0.8m into children's social care which has led to increased capacity, improved performance and outcomes.

80. Implementation of the important BSF project, which is a major vehicle to support the delivery of priorities, is at the consultation stage prior to submission of the outline business case. However, there are significant current risks to the programme's delivery. These are in the process of being tackled but the outcome is uncertain.

81. Key elements of the Every Child Matters agenda are not yet sufficiently well supported by strategies. Areas of greatest strength, for example the 14-19 agenda, are those where strategy is at the centre of a structured, data rich and well monitored approach. In contrast, the preventative strategy is at an early stage of development and approaches to early intervention and prevention are not yet firmly rooted in a strategic framework. The council is making insufficient progress in developing the inclusion strategy. At a service level, there are some good areas of preventative work, including for those most at risk, for example, through Children's Centres, Operation Messenger and Positive Steps Oldham.

82. Planning and review at service level is adequate, leading to, for example, improvement in initial and core assessments, placement stability of looked after children, re-registrations and attainment post-16. Equalities and diversity issues are well considered within services, for example, through the Shared Future Project in schools and the Youth Service Fusion project.

83. The capacity of the council and its partners is adequate. The CYPF directorate has experienced a period of significant change amongst the most senior officers over the past two years. Not all service director posts are currently filled substantively and a number are relatively new appointments. The new director of children's services has made good progress towards integrating her new team and in ensuring she has comprehensive knowledge of all areas of the directorate's work. Effective decision making has led to the significant changes in the youth offending service, including the structure and location of services. Service directors have wider responsibilities beyond their initial areas of expertise, thus developing management capacity across the team. Capable middle managers feel well supported.

84. Political leadership is also developing. A change of administration in May this year has led to the appointment of a new portfolio holder for CYPF, who has previous experience of the children and young people's agenda and is committed to continuing to raise the profile of corporate parenting. The new leader has a good understanding of children and young people's issues, and their interface with other aspects of the council's business at a strategic level.

85. Although sensible processes and procedures have been put in place and are being implemented, sickness absence performance is still in the bottom quartile in CYPF and the council as a whole.

86. The council delayed the integration of its education and children's social care services until October 2006, having appropriately focused initially on improving the quality of its children's social care services. This enabled it to ensure the safety of children and young people and to establish a better baseline for development. Progress towards effective Children's Trust arrangements has consequently been slow. However there is an established history of partnership arrangements upon which to build and the council has shared strategic responsibility for key areas of the Every Child Matters agenda with other organisations. Mechanisms for the effective sharing of learning

across teams in CYPF, the directorate and partners are not systematic. As a result, opportunities to maximise skills and knowledge are not yet fully utilised.

87. Individual partners, for example, the PCT, provide strong additional capacity. Capacity to deliver the skills and regeneration agenda is enhanced by collaboration with the two local outstanding colleges. CfC partnership board structures, which were reviewed and reorganised in February 2008, are now being sensibly developed to meet the needs of the new cross-cutting LAA arrangements and ensure accountability for the National Indicator Set and CYPP targets through seven Service Delivery Partnerships. These sub-groups have yet to establish their work programmes.

88. Voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) organisations are well represented on the new CfC Strategy Group as chairs of almost all the Service Delivery Partnerships. The creation of the Children and Young People's Hub for the VCFS has increased the effectiveness of arrangements for representation and involvement, although this continues to require ongoing development in order to ensure the capacity building necessary within the sector is taking place. There is evidence of effective VCFS involvement in the delivery of services, for example Young Carers, respite services and independent advocacy.

89. The use of joint commissioning is developing slowly but effectively. There is a clear relationship between joint commissioning and the development of Children's Trust arrangements within the wider LAA framework. A number of services for children and young people are commissioned from the area based grant delegated from the LSP but a joint commissioning strategy is not yet in place.

90. The Youth Council has an active voice and is well supported by CYPF. Youth Councillors are provided with very good opportunities to participate in most levels of decision-making across the directorate. Access to training and development is good and there is much evidence of their influence on decision-making. However, involvement of parents and carers of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at a strategic level is limited.

91. Effective integrated working of co-located teams is taking place in some cases, for example, the children with disabilities team and Positive Steps Oldham, the latter enabling services to reach a wide range of young people including those who offend and have left care. However, pilots on locality working through virtual multi-agency teams are at an early stage. The roll out of locality working to all six areas is behind the original schedule and has had no single strategic lead, which has been recognised as a barrier by the council. Implementation of the Common Assessment Framework has been slow and impact has, therefore, been patchy.

92. Good progress on a workforce development strategy has been made, resulting in, for example, reduced teacher vacancies and the ability of the council to successfully 'grow its own' social workers, including those from Black and minority ethnic communities. Effective support has been given to staff from

these communities to enable them to attain GCSE's in English and Mathematics and to progress from NVQ Level 2 to qualified social worker. The PCT has also been successful in increasing overall Black and minority ethnic representation within its workforce. There is high CYPF staff satisfaction with training and development.

93. Data management is adequate. The council has increased capacity within data management support services but currently, whilst good examples exist, such as in the school attendance improvement service and the development of data for the virtual school for looked after children and young people, the approach to the analysis of data to inform service development is not systematic across all services. Middle managers are currently well supported by information and communication technology services (ICT) for example in the introduction of a computerised recording system (SWIFT) in social care. However, the council is in the process of introducing several significant new corporate ICT systems in a short period of time, including the financial information system, a performance management information system and human resource systems. The capacity within the council to deliver these new systems effectively as a cohesive whole is as yet unproven.

94. The CYPF Directorate in the council has effectively managed its significant overspend on children's placements and good reductions have been achieved in the use of independent fostering agency placements. The schools funding formula is subject to a useful annual review, although the special educational needs formula is not yet meeting needs. The holding of schools to account for balances has not been sufficiently rigorous but is now being addressed.

95. Value for money is adequate. The council is continuing to improve a number of outcomes within a context of significant financial challenges and a requirement for major efficiency savings. However, mechanisms to improve value for money are underdeveloped. Neither the council nor the CfC Board undertake any robust or systematic analysis of value for money. The relationship between strategic planning, financial medium-term planning and performance management is insufficiently robust both in the CYPF and at the CfC Board.

96. Performance management is adequate. The 'golden thread' from strategic plans through CYPF service improvement plans and team plans to individual appraisals and performance reviews is clear. However, the quality of some CYPF service improvement plans is variable.

97. The council's overarching performance monitoring arrangements are thorough, with appropriate consideration of key indicators on a regular basis by both officers and councillors. There has been a good focus on high risk poor performance in social care, including the introduction of performance challenge sessions. These have been valued by managers and led to improvement in outcomes, for example, for looked after children and young people. No school is in an Ofsted category.

98. However, the understanding of the impact of individual activities on outcomes is less secure and robust. Performance management frameworks are not in place to measure the impact of preventative work or locality delivery. Due to difficulties in the implementation of the council's new financial information system in April, payroll information has not been available since then to enable regular, comprehensive budget monitoring by either officers or elected members, except on a manual basis for high risk areas.

99. Overview and scrutiny arrangements to date have been weak overall within the council and have not provided consistent and effective challenge. There have, however, been examples of scrutiny which has contributed to improvement debates, for example with regard to fostering, and the Youth Council has been involved in recent scrutiny work. New arrangements are in place, but it is too soon to identify any impact.

100. Performance monitoring and management by the CfC Board is adequate. The CfC Board previously received quarterly monitoring information by exception and has focused on issues of concern, for example figures for the number of young people not in education, employment or training, in order to challenge and add value to consideration of key areas. This has led to additional multi-agency approaches to tackle issues. Improved partnership performance monitoring arrangements have been in place within the CfC Board arrangements since February of this year. Clear responsibilities allocated to Service Development Partnerships, together with the creation of a new Research and Performance Board to support them, are positive developments. It is too soon to identify impact of these improved arrangements.

101. Capacity to improve is adequate. CYPF faces uncertainty, along with the rest of the council, regarding potential efficiency cuts. The council's financial position is facing significant challenge, medium-term financial planning, including at partnership level, is insufficient and value for money is not yet being considered. The deliverability of BSF as a major vehicle for ambitions is uncertain. However, there is sound evidence of action taken leading to improvement, for example, in social care performance indicators, the attainment of five A*-C grades at GCSE for looked after children, 14-19 educational outcomes, the achievement of 'outstanding' for the fostering inspection and the acceleration of the Children's Centre programme following slippage. Good progress has been made in integrating the relatively new CYPF management team. Once implemented, new systems have an enhanced capacity to assist performance focus, together with new CfC arrangements which have better capacity to enhance accountability and increase the pace of delivery of the Every Child Matters agenda.

Annex A

CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE¹

1. Outcomes for children and young people in Oldham are improving and are now generally in line with, or better than, in similar areas. Significant improvements have been made to the quality of social care. Good arrangements are in place to ensure that children in need of protection are identified and supported. Looked after children are well cared for and live in stable placements. A clear focus on equality and diversity issues ensures the needs of the majority of children and young people are met.

2. Service management in Oldham is adequate. The ambition for children and young people is good and shared by all key partners. The relationship of the CYPP to LAA targets is strong and there is a shared responsibility for children and young people. However, resources are not identified fully across all partners and financial plans only cover one year. Progress towards effective Children's Trust arrangements have been slow, although there is a history of partnership arrangements upon which to build. Effective arrangements have been established to support staff, in particular those from Black and minority ethnic communities, to progress from national vocational Level 2, to qualified social worker. Outcomes against national indicators are well monitored but the impact of provision is insufficiently evaluated.

3. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Partners work well together to promote healthy lifestyles. Services are targeted on the areas of greatest deprivation, with a clear focus on preventative care. A strong emphasis is placed on reducing health inequalities through a range of well-targeted sport and leisure activities. Actions to reduce the rate of teenage pregnancy are effective. In 2006, the teenage pregnancy rate had reduced by 32.8% from the 1998 baseline, which is significantly better than national and similar authorities, and exceeds the 2010 target of 28.3%. Health support, including early intervention and prevention, for looked after children and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective.

4. Children and young people appear safe and arrangements to ensure this are good. The effective LSCB has appropriate representation and is working well. Recruitment practices across the partnership comply with requirements. Duty systems are well resourced and managed. Multi-agency child protection arrangements work well. The fostering service is outstanding and the stability of placements for those looked after is good. Schools and settings where

¹ Judgements contained in the corporate assessment of children's services are based on a combination of the outcomes of the joint area review and the latest published annual performance assessment (APA 2007) available at the time of the inspection.

children are cared for provide safe environments. However, progress towards implementation of the Common Assessment Framework has been slow.

5. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and to achieve well is adequate. In 2006/07, attainment at Key Stages 1 and 3 remained below the averages nationally and for similar authorities. There were improvements at Key Stage 2, where results in mathematics improved to above the average for national and similar authorities. Key Stage 4 results improved at a faster pace than nationally. The percentage of pupils achieving five or more GCSE's A*-C increased in 2006/07, bringing Oldham broadly in line with the national average and above similar authorities. However, the numbers attaining five or more GCSE's A* to C including English and mathematics remained below the average for national and similar authorities. Attainment of looked after children is satisfactory. Through good partnership work, the range of opportunities available to children and young people within and outside school has been considerably extended. Good support is provided to vulnerable children to enable them to enjoy and achieve. No schools are currently in an Ofsted category of concern.

6. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. There is a strong strategic commitment to young people's participation and to listening to young people's views. Young people contribute to staff recruitment and there are good examples of services developing in response to their views. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and looked after children are provided with good support to participate in the Youth Council. Much effort is made to ensure those receiving services take part in reviews. The council takes its corporate parenting responsibilities seriously, and high quality services for children and young people who are looked after are championed effectively by members. Although first time offending is reducing well, re-offending rates remain higher than in similar areas.

7. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good. Effective partnership working across Connexions, schools and providers has resulted in good outcomes in terms of the numbers of 16 to 18 year olds, including care leavers aged 16 to 18, involved in education, employment or training. The number of young people aged 16 to 18 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are not in education, employment or training has reduced but remains higher than nationally. Intervention projects with those at risk of disengagement with education and the expansion of 14 to 19 vocational opportunities, together with apprenticeship programmes, make a further significant contribution in this area. Provision for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 16 to 19 is good. More young people aged 16 are remaining in education compared to national and similar authorities. The percentage of young people gaining Level 2 and 3 qualifications by the age of 19 is above the national average.

8. The capacity of council services to improve is adequate. The council and its partners are addressing longstanding weaknesses in educational attainment and services for vulnerable young people well. There is much evidence of action taken leading to improvement, for example, in social care performance indicators, the percentage of looked after children attaining five GCSEs at grades A*-C and 14-19 educational outcomes. However, the changes are recent and there is insufficient evidence of continuous and sustained improvement. Value for money is adequate, however neither the council nor the CfC Board undertake any robust or systematic analysis of this. There is a lack of a sufficiently robust relationship between strategic planning, financial medium term planning and performance management.

Annex B

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

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