

JOINT AREA REVIEW

The team of nine inspectors carried out their work in July 2008. They looked at the contribution of local services in ensuring that:

- Children and young people at risk or requiring safeguarding are effectively cared for
- Children and young people who are looked after achieve the best possible outcomes;
- Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve the best possible outcomes

They also looked at:

- The impact of the partners' strategy on reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training
- The impact of the partners strategy in reducing the teenage pregnancy rate.

And at:

- Youth development services

Equality and diversity

- Effective action is being taken to improve the life chances of hard to reach groups such as traveller children and their families by affording them easier access to a range of culturally sensitive and flexible services
- Systematic action is being taken to ensure equality of access to services so that those living in rural and isolated areas are not disadvantaged

Safeguarding

- Children and young people say they feel safe – there is good quality information to inform them of potential dangers
- Arrangements for agencies to collaborate in safeguarding children are good
- LSCB effective – leadership effective, good challenge
- Excellent multi-agency training
- Staff vetting carried out rigorously by the Council
- All reviews for children in receipt of CP plans carried out on time
- All children allocated to qualified social workers who are well trained and supported to understand and meet their needs
- QA arrangements are effective – cases regularly monitored through good supervision and the rigorous independent chairing of child protection conferences
- Good independent Children's Advocacy Service is commissioned from Barnardos

Safeguarding (continued)

- Healthy lifestyles promoted well
- Sexual health education and provision well targeted
- CAMHS
 - adequate provision
 - known variations in service provision being addressed through the creation of a single CAMHS provider
 - pathway referral service has improved access and contributed to a reduction in waiting lists
- No specialist CAMHS provision for LDD
- Children and parents affected by domestic abuse are identified well and supported by good partnership work and services
- The Council has successfully agreed and implemented a joint road safety strategy with the police and PCT
- Clear policies, advice and guidance provided on the prevention of bullying with evidence of good targeted action taken by schools and the Council
- Children and young people supported well in developing socially and emotionally
- Good support provided to parents to maintain positive relationship with their children – wide range of multi-agency parenting support programmes

Safeguarding (continued)

- Very good and effective action taken to identify and reduce anti-social behaviour
- Action to reduce the level of offending and re-offending has been vigorous (4/134)
- Good protocols and strong tracking processes are in place for missing children and those missing education
- School attendance is better than the national average and is monitored rigorously
- Council has worked well to reduce fixed-term and permanent exclusions
- Use of family group conferencing and the work of the highly regarded crisis intervention service has been effective in preventing family breakdown and reducing the impact on children and young people
- Staff are committed, child centred, increasingly well supported and have good skills in working directly and effectively with children

Safeguarding (continued)

- CAF not widely or consistently used across all agencies
- Variations in performance between social care teams in the completion of initial and core assessments
- Some inconsistency in deciding when to commission a core assessment across the different social care teams

Looked After Children

- Placement stability good
- Good fostering and adoption services
- Discrete adoption team to improve permanent family finding
- Historically LAC numbers very low – 2007/08 increase leading to significant overspend in the placement budget
- Appropriate outsourcing of two residential care homes
- Historically high percentage of children placed in residential provision (22.8% → 19.6%, comparators = 14.4%) and percentage of children placed more than 20 miles from their home address is high
- Good quality training and support to foster carers, especially attachment work – but need more foster carers
- Commissioning Strategy beginning to impact
- Timeliness of reviews and percentage of children and young people communicating their views has improved

Looked After Children

- Good action taken by partners to provide a range of health and other forms of advice, including drugs and alcohol
- Decline in the number of teenage conceptions – focused work has had a significant impact
- Percentage receiving health and dental checks has improved significantly over the last year
- LAC are benefiting from improved and more equitable access to CAMHS
- Very good children rights service offers high levels of engagement and advocacy

Looked After Children (continued)

- Good rate of care leavers in education, employment and training
- Nine young people at university and two pursuing masters degrees supported by the Council
- However LAC educational attainment remains an issue (acknowledged that cohorts are small with high percentage of children with LDD)
- Aftercare service has been reviewed but capacity remains an issue
- High number of children awaiting adoption hearings at Court
- LAC attendance needs to improve

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD)

- Partnership working between health, social care, the voluntary sector and education services, including schools has developed considerably over the last 18 months
- Management action has galvanised services and improved the pace of change
- New service model for speech and language therapy being developed – but currently some children do not receive a timely service
- All pre-school children access early years settings that are of better overall quality than that found nationally
- Effective new procedures for the early identification of children with LDD are in place
- Positive outcomes from multi-agency meetings include the full engagement and empowerment of parents in their child's development and early education

Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD)

- Transition still an issue – but recent work has ensured satisfactory progress
- Parent Partnership Service highly valued and provides high quality support
- Communication with Council officers via the Customer Care Service remains a concern for some parents
- High quality special schools
- But ... a number of pupils with higher level needs are often placed in schools outside of Wiltshire due to a lack of educational and residential provision within the county
- Reduction in NEET good for young people with LDD
- Work-based learning opportunities currently insufficient to meet the level of need
- Short break provision is of good quality – Canon's House highly valued
- Children and young people with LDD say they feel safe within their schools and within their local area.
- Good opportunities for young people with LDD to engage in decision-making

NEET

- Good reduction in the proportion not in education, employment or training
- Effective early intervention work
- Good targeted and diversionary projects to re-engage and challenge young people at risk of exclusion
- Limited range of post 16 vocational provision to meet the needs of young people
- Further development is required in mapping provision and planning for the future needs of young people from Key Stage 4 to post 16

Teenage pregnancy rate

- Historically low rates of teenage pregnancy
- The strong partnership commitment and joint working to address sexual health promotion and to reduce teenage pregnancy levels
- The *No Worries* programme of services
- Impressive reduction in teenage pregnancy in areas of most need
- The linking of the teenage pregnancy agenda to the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) approaches within primary and secondary schools is good
- Senior staff act as promotional champions for the joined-up teenage sexual health and PSHEE agendas
- Governance arrangements for joint working need to be strengthened

Service management/capacity to improve

- Ambitions good
- The CYPP partnership is now being effectively led by the Council and partners who have developed clear and consensual priorities
- Good CYPP – clearly stated and challenging vision
- Good alignment between the CYPP, LAA and plans for Wiltshire to become a unitary authority
- Significant and rapid progress in the development of children's centres and extended services
- Very good involvement and representation of the voluntary sector
- CYPP partnership has made significant and rapid progress over the last 18 months and is working effectively with a clear commitment from all partners to deliver improvement for children and young people

Service management/capacity to improve (continued)

- Successful re-engagement with the PCT and from a very low base the partnership has effectively rebuilt or strengthened its relationship with schools, the college and the voluntary sector – partnership now benefits from strong relationships
- Good engagement and consultation with parents, carers, children and young people
- Lead members role and responsibilities are clear
- Not all strategies are supported by SMART action plans – planning is not consistently applied at the service level
- Slow progress in responding to value for money issues in aspects of social care and SEN
- Progress in developing an overarching workforce plan has been too slow
- The ownership and a wider understanding of performance management has not yet been achieved
- There is not currently sufficient management capacity to deliver an ambitious agenda