



Joint area review

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Children's Services Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

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

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

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

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

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

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

- self-assessment undertaken by local public service providers
- a survey of children and young people
- performance data
- the findings of the contemporaneous inspection of the youth service
- planning documents
- information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day-care provision;
- briefings from staff within inspectorates, commissions and other public bodies in contact with local providers.

6. The second stage included inspection fieldwork. This included studies of how far local services have improved outcomes for a small sample of children and young people, some of whom have the most complex needs, and a study of provision in one neighbourhood in North Kensington. It also included gathering evidence on six key judgements, selected because of their critical

importance to improving outcomes for children and young people in the local area. This included discussions with elected members of the local authority and their equivalents in other public agencies, officers from these agencies, service users, and community representatives.

Context

7. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) is the second smallest local authority in the United Kingdom. It is also the most densely populated in Europe with a diverse and growing population. Almost half of pupils in Kensington and Chelsea schools speak English as an additional language and across the borough as a whole some 102 different languages are spoken. The most common languages are Arabic, Portuguese, Spanish, Tagalog, French and Somali. Although the borough is affluent with income levels and property values which are significantly higher than national averages, this disguises the fact that there are pockets of high deprivation with one area in the 4% of the most deprived 'super-output' areas in England and Wales. Whilst overall the local economy is thriving, there are areas where employment is below the national average. There are also marked health inequalities across the borough and between the least and most deprived wards with an estimated life expectancy difference of up to 12 years. The 2004 total population estimate for Kensington and Chelsea was 184,100, of which 34,900 are children and young people aged 0 to 19 years. Approximately one in five households has dependent children. There is considerable fluidity in the borough's population with some wards experiencing 25% or more turnover of population year on year.

8. RBKC enjoys a positive history of strong partnership working and this forms a firm foundation for the delivery of integrated services for families and children. The Family and Children's Strategic Partnership is overseeing the development and delivery of the Children and Young Peoples Plan (CYPP). This plan has the overriding objective of "Strong families at the heart of strong communities" and provides the focus for effective joint work across the borough. The Executive Director of Family and Children's services will become a member of the Primary Care Trust Board and is assuming the management responsibility for health staff working with children and families in the borough. RBKC has consistently provided effective and efficient social services and education departments and set high standards of performance. Nevertheless, there is a continued drive and impetus to improve the way services are delivered across this diverse area. Services for children and families are being restructured and, through the new Family and Children's Business Group, joint work is being coordinated to achieve improved outcomes across all the objectives set out in *Every Child Matters*.

9. Plans are well advanced to establish a Children's Trust, which by spring 2007 will serve as the joint commissioning body for children's services in the area. The Family and Children's Strategic Partnership is fully operational and sets the strategic priorities and decisions for integrated services in the borough.

This work is informed by an advisory group comprising representatives from a wide range of local organisations and bodies including service users and voluntary organisations. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is fully operational. The Kensington and Chelsea Primary Care Trust, (PCT), Chelsea and Westminster NHS Trust, Central and North West London Mental Health Trust and St Mary's Hospital NHS Trust provide health care for children in Kensington and Chelsea.

10. The council's 26 primary schools and four secondary schools have an excellent record of performance and attainment. At secondary level, places are consistently over-subscribed. Figures for 2006/07 show over 1700 applicants for only 600 places. There are advanced plans to build a new, mixed, Church of England Academy specialising in sciences sponsored by the London Diocesan board, RBKC and the Department for Education and Skills. Additionally a redevelopment of Holland Park School and a refurbishment programme for other schools in the borough are planned. There is a rich mix of independent schools within the borough which cater for a significant number of resident children and many children from other areas.

11. The number of children who are looked after by the council, as at 31 August 2006 was 236 (including respite care). Over 70% of looked after children are placed outside the borough but over 75% of this group are placed within Greater London. The population of looked after children is unusual: around 50% are aged 15-17 years old, and around a quarter are unaccompanied minors seeking asylum. The council was awarded beacon status for leaving care services and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, (CAMHS), have also achieved this status. Transition arrangements for children with disabilities are overseen through a RBKC project 'Mind the gap'.

12. The Central London learning and skills council, (LSC), which also covers Camden, Islington, Lambeth, Southwark, Wandsworth and Westminster, has partnerships with the council, colleges and schools to address the 14-19 strategy. Entry to Employment provision is managed by the LSC and delivered through a number of providers including Notting Dale Technology College.

Summary report

Outcomes for children and young people

13. Outcomes for children and young people in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea are outstanding. Children and young people are very safe.

14. The impressive history of high performing children's services in RBKC is being continued. A strong drive to make children's services more family orientated and supportive and more responsive to the varied needs of a fluid and diverse population is reflected in current outcomes for children and young people in the borough. Plans are clearly stated with defined objectives fully

supported at all levels and are leading to excellent and good outcomes across all areas of service. Systems across the area to monitor outcomes and to measure progress against agreed priorities are well embedded. The partnership has remained highly focused on maintaining reliable services whilst simultaneously implementing ambitious plans for change and development.

15. Health outcomes are outstanding and reflect the way services have been refocused with the primary aim of preventing or reducing illness and promoting healthy lifestyles. The overall incidence of childhood accident and illness is low in the borough. There have been significant improvements in breast-feeding initiation rates and in promoting healthy lifestyles. Teenage conceptions are significantly lower than the national average as the result of well targeted and integrated health services. From all the evidence gathered during this review children and young people appear very safe in RBKC. Children who are at most risk of significant harm are very well protected by outstanding inter-agency collaboration and professional practice. CAMHS in the borough are well organised, responsive and producing good outcomes.

16. Children and young people achieve very well and enjoy and achieve outcomes are outstanding. Children and young people have a strong sense of pride in their school communities. The attainment levels of looked after children are excellent against national comparators. School inspections show that children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Children and young people in RBKC are able to influence decisions in their schools and communities. RBKC was the first area in London to achieve the advanced level of the Hear by Right standards. Almost all schools have school councils and there is a thriving youth forum. The rate of youth crime is lower than comparative London boroughs but higher than the national average. The rate children enter the youth justice system in RBKC for the first time is decreasing and below the rate for similar authorities. Young people in RBKC are less likely to be victims of crime than in the rest of London. Participation of looked after children in review meetings is outstanding.

17. Language support for children and young people across the borough is excellent and the quality of post-16 education is also good. Ofsted graded the Central London Connexions service, led by RBKC, as excellent. Success rates for level 3 programmes, such as AS/A levels and Vocational Certificate of Education (VCE) are above national and neighbour averages. Progression and participation rates in further and higher education are very good. There is excellent work to improve housing for vulnerable children and families despite the fact that the provision of affordable housing in RBKC remains challenging due to the significantly high cost of housing in the borough.

The impact of local services

18. The overall effectiveness of the council's children's services is outstanding.

19. Services for children and young people in the partnership are mostly outstanding and are having considerable impact. The impact of all local services in promoting healthy lifestyles, safeguarding vulnerable children, supporting educational achievement and attainment and facilitating participation is outstanding. Joint services to support economic well-being are good. There is a strong commitment to raising standards and an impressive track record of securing year on year improvements in health and education outcomes. Parents and carers receive good support and guidance to help their children enjoy play and recreation and to achieve well at school. The quality of childcare and early years provision is good overall and early years settings provide very well for children to enjoy and achieve. Support for schools and school improvement is outstanding. Targeted intervention for children and young people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities who are vulnerable to underachievement is very good. Support for looked after children's health, promotion of welfare and inclusion and education is excellent with effective monitoring at all Key Stages. There are consistent incremental improvements in educational attainment for this group. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and have access to well co-ordinated services that are accessible.

20. The RBKC partnership is ambitious for children and young people with clear and achievable objectives comprehensively set out in the RBKC CYPP. Priorities are well defined and resources to deliver these have been identified by all key partners. There is exceptionally strong leadership of the change agenda provided by informed and committed elected members and high calibre officers at all levels. Plans are advanced to establish a Children's Trust from spring 2007 with very clear arrangements in place for safeguarding and engagement of partners in planning and service delivery. Performance management within children's services is very good.

Being healthy

21. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is outstanding.

22. Overall outcomes are outstanding, with excellent performance on breastfeeding, teenage pregnancy, healthy eating and CAMHS. There is an excellent range of child health care provision and support is very well targeted at vulnerable groups. A good example of this is additional support from the home visiting team for lone parents and parents with complex needs. Effective strategies are in place to promote healthier lifestyles and all schools provide healthy school meals and work closely with youth service play centres to provide physical exercise. There is an excellent strategic approach to sexual health education and services are readily accessible. This is having a very positive impact on sexual behaviour and there is a reduction in teenage pregnancy rates. Infant and perinatal mortality rates are comparatively low.

23. Health provision for looked after children is outstanding and health and social care professionals are working collaboratively to promote children's health and to safeguard their well-being. Designated nurses and doctors work closely to support and implement safeguarding standards to protect children and young people and to promote their welfare. Children with disabilities and their families are consistently involved with the shaping of their services and many of these services now have common pathway and assessment processes. There is a joint register for children with disabilities involving neighbouring boroughs, the PCTs and voluntary sector. There is an independent advocacy service to enable children to communicate about health issues that affect their lives. There is also a wide range of joint services and information for disabled children and their parents and carers and excellent access to the portage scheme and day care in family centres. Access to CAMHS for children and young people, including disabled children, is very good.

Staying safe

24. The overall contribution of services to keeping children and young people safe is outstanding.

25. Families, children and young people are well informed about their general safety in the community. The LSCB is addressing the wider safeguarding agenda and is working to ensure that the needs of vulnerable children as well as those most at risk are effectively met. Information is available to parents and children about risks in the home and in the community and there has been significant success in reducing the number of road accidents involving children. Services are child focused and work in an open and transparent way with parents and families. There is evidence from other regulatory inspections that health and safety responsibilities are managed effectively.

26. There is an excellent range of preventative and family support services in place. Strong interagency working is well embedded within the local area. Risks of harm to children and young people are consistently identified and addressed on an interagency basis. The number of children on the child protection register is lower than that of similar authorities. All children on the register are allocated a qualified social worker. There is an excellent and effective electronic recording system for the assessment framework and a robust file auditing system is in place and is exemplary. Supervision is effectively recorded and decision making is clear.

27. Safeguarding of looked after children is promoted very effectively and the borough observes its statutory responsibilities up to and beyond the age of 18 years. All looked after children benefit from the supervision of qualified social workers, and statutory visits are undertaken consistently for children placed within and outside the borough. A very high proportion of looked after children contribute their views to statutory reviews and are effectively supported in doing so. Looked after children are consulted on a range of issues. The population of looked after children in RBKC is reducing under the influence of

the older cohort of children leaving care, effective gate keeping, and more intensive preventative services.

Enjoying and achieving

28. The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people enjoy their education and recreation and achieve well is outstanding.

29. There is a strong commitment to raising standards and an impressive track record of securing year on year improvements in educational outcomes. Parents and carers receive good support and guidance to help their children enjoy play and recreation and to achieve well at school. The quality of childcare and early years provision is good overall and early years settings provide very well for children to enjoy and achieve. Support for schools and school improvement is excellent. Targeted intervention for children and young people from BME communities who are vulnerable to underachievement is outstanding. Schools reported very good support for attendance issues from the Education Welfare Service and action to reduce permanent exclusions in the secondary sector is being effectively implemented, although as yet results remain modest. The local authority has agreed significant additional resources to extend provision for a relatively small group of students who are educated other than at school and whose complex needs have been difficult to meet in the past. There is a high priority placed on voluntary learning, recreation, sport and play provision in the area. Support for looked after children's education is excellent and there is effective monitoring at all key stages. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported to enjoy their education and achieve.

Making a positive contribution

30. The overall contribution of services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is outstanding.

31. Children and young people in RBKC are given excellent support in a variety of settings to develop socially and emotionally and acquire a good sense of self-worth. There is good support for all children and young people to manage change and respond to challenges in their lives. This includes outstanding support for a number of vulnerable groups including teenage parents, Traveller children and children from BME groups including asylum seekers and refugees. The involvement of children and young people in decision making processes and in supporting the community is outstanding. There has been a high level of involvement by young people in the CYPP and the borough has a vibrant youth forum.

32. Partners are collaborating extremely well in RBKC to reduce anti-social behaviour by children and young people. There have been a number of successful projects to tackle specific concerns and to engage young people positively in diversionary activities out of school hours. Changes over the last

year in the Youth Offending Team have secured clarity of direction and are leading to well targeted action to prevent offending and reduce re-offending. There is good access to advocacy services when required and complaints are handled appropriately with very good analysis of issues of concern in annual reports. There is excellent awareness across the borough of the importance of enabling children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make a positive contribution and there are some outstanding examples of young people with disabilities being fully integrated into key activities such as the youth forum.

Achieving economic well being

33. The overall contribution of services to helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good.

34. RBKC and partners have good partnership arrangements to support families and young people's economic development. Language support is excellent and the quality of post-16 education is very good. The Connexions service is excellent and works extensively with a wide range of agencies to support young people. This service is highly valued and developing more ways to coordinate its programmes with other key agencies and groups in RBKC. Success rates for level 3 programmes are above national and neighbour averages. Progression and participation to further and higher education is also very good.

35. The overall level 2 and 3 qualification profile for young people aged 19 living in the borough is satisfactory and generally in line with statistical neighbours. The borough recognises that there is a need for more secondary school places and has clear plans to establish a new academy in the south of the borough. There are also plans to redevelop Holland Park School and refurbish other schools in the borough. An effective strategy is in place to strengthen level 1 and 2 services and access to vocational and skills training. RBKC offers good community initiatives through very good partnership arrangements. RBKC has more housing units for young people at risk and leaving care compared to London and national averages.

Service management

36. Overall, the management of services for children and young people is outstanding.

37. All children's services are very well managed. They are consistently of a high standard with excellent staff engagement in the delivery of the CYPP. Ambitions for children and young people are excellent and underpinned by effective use of resources. The council and its partners are tackling a demanding agenda for children and young people and are well geared to achieve high expectations. This is clearly articulated in high level strategies and in the determination of councillors and officers for continuous improvement from what is already a very high baseline. There is a strong culture of ambition

and high expectation throughout children's services and effective partnership working to deliver these ambitions. Prioritisation is excellent. Through the developing Family and Children's Strategic Partnership, there are ambitious and challenging plans to improve and integrate children's services. The outcomes for children and young people are given the appropriate high prominence within the council's priorities. Priorities are based on a clear articulation of need and any gaps in provision are identified and responded to with alacrity. Capacity to improve further is excellent. Resource, financial and budget management are effective and many services for children and young people provide good value for money. Joint arrangements for service commissioning and workforce planning are adequate but are being developed to meet new demands. Joint arrangements to strengthen these functions are being developed. There is a very robust performance management culture within children's services. The council has well established systems and processes that are constantly being fine tuned to improve consistency and meet exacting standards. The findings of this review are consistent with the judgements made by the council and its partners in the self-assessment.

Grades

Grades awarded:

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

	Local services overall	Council services	Health services
Being healthy	4		
Staying safe	4		
Enjoying and achieving	4		
Making a positive contribution	4		
Achieving economic well-being	3		
Service management	4		
Capacity to improve	4	4	
Children's services		4	
The education service		4	
The social care services for children		4	
The health service for children			3

Recommendations

For action over the next six months

- Agreed plans to establish a joint commissioning business unit should be accelerated to ensure greater consistency in purchasing placements and services, to facilitate the aggregation of needs data and the collation of local intelligence on effective working.
- Strengthen services to support the economic well-being of families and young people. This should include adult and community

learning, level 2 and 3 achievement rates for young people by 19 years of age and the full implementation of the 14-19 strategy.

- The council and PCT should develop a formal process to regularly evaluate the impact of the PCT deficit on the development and implementation of joint services for children and young people in RBKC to ensure this does not have an adverse impact on outcomes.

Main report

Outcomes for children and young people

38. Outcomes for children and young people in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea are excellent. Children and young people are generally very healthy.

39. Health outcomes in RBKC are outstanding with excellent performance in increasing breast-feeding, in reducing teenage pregnancy and in promoting healthy lifestyles. Access to health provision in the borough, including CAMHS and other more specialised services is very good. Effective strategies are in place to promote healthier lifestyles. All schools provide healthy school meals and work closely with youth service play centres to provide physical exercise with excellent outcomes. Although immunisation rates remain comparatively low due to high population shifts and under reporting, recent developments are showing sustained improvements in rates.

40. Health support and advice for looked after children is outstanding with excellent examples of cooperation across sectors to meet needs, to promote children's health and to safeguard their well-being. Children with disabilities and their families are involved in the shaping of health services with common assessment processes and pathways to services being agreed. There is a joint register for children with disabilities involving neighbouring boroughs, the PCTs and voluntary sector. Services and information for children with disabilities are very good with good access to portage schemes and direct payments. Access to CAMHS is outstanding, including for disabled children, and service provision is well coordinated and of high quality. This service has achieved beacon status.

41. Children and young people appear very safe.

42. The local safeguarding board is fully operational and is effective. There is an excellent range of preventative and family support services in place with good evidence that these are producing good outcomes. Systems to identify children who may be at risk are effective with clear processes for referral and assessment. Risk management is very good. The system for electronic recording for the assessment framework is exemplary with robust auditing capacity. All staff working to safeguard children are well supported, supervised and trained. Families, children and young people, parents and carers are well informed about safeguarding issues.

43. Placement stability for looked after children is good. Case allocation for child protection and looked after children cases is outstanding and social workers maintain statutory responsibility until looked after children, including unaccompanied minors, reach the age of 18. Arrangements to formally review care plans for looked after children are robust with 100% reviews held in accordance with statutory requirements. Participation rates are also high. Local regulatory reports for the Adoption Service, Foster Care Service, and residential care services have reported excellent findings. Adoption of looked after children performance is good and the LPSA target has been met.

44. Initial and core assessments are of high quality and have a strong child focus. The use of residential care for looked after children in RBKC is below comparators, and the few children who need residential care benefit from high quality practice with good support from outreach teams. The costs of looked after children are comparatively high but are being reduced through lower use of residential care. Foster care and adoptive placement rates are high at 82% (excluding unaccompanied minors). Good training opportunities are provided for foster carers at different levels with good take-up. Statutory requirements to visit looked after children are being fully met. Outcomes for disabled children in RBKC are good with planned improvements in response to positive consultation with parents. This includes plans to extend the provision of short breaks, play, holiday schemes and after school support. Access to direct payments is good and expanding. There is good evidence from case tracking that the wider needs of children with disabilities are being effectively addressed.

45. **Children and young people achieve very well.**

46. Educational attainment overall is outstanding. Outcomes for early years and the foundation stage are excellent. At Key Stage 1, a high proportion of children are new arrivals to this country, many of whom are in the early stages of learning English. Their achievement overall is now better than those in comparable areas. The progress that all children make between Key Stages 1 and 2 is outstanding. In English, mathematics and science, attainment at Key Stage 2 is consistently above that nationally and in similar areas; this pattern is repeated at Key Stage 3. The proportion of young people gaining five or more GCSEs has consistently been well above the national average and statistical neighbours and continues to improve. A high proportion of children and young people surveyed, and interviewed, as part of the inspection process enjoy school very much. They value not only the support they receive for their academic progress but also the pastoral support and the wide variety of enriching extra-curricular activities that they take part in. Children and young people have a strong sense of pride in their school community. The attainment levels of those children who are looked after are good against national comparators. School inspections show that children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well.

47. Children and young people have a wide range of opportunities to make decisions and take personal responsibility and many make an excellent contribution to their communities.

48. Children and young people in Kensington and Chelsea are able to influence decisions in their schools and comment on a considerable number of services that support them. RBKC was the first area in London to achieve the advanced level of the Hear by Right standards and regular satisfaction surveys and audits confirm the positive view young people and parents have of the borough. Most schools have school councils and there is a thriving youth forum that is involved in wide ranging decisions including those relating to grant funding decisions. All schools recently inspected by Ofsted have been graded as outstanding or very good in terms of the extent to which learners make a positive contribution to their community. This is confirmed through the Tellus survey. More young people in RBKC are involved in volunteering than is the average nationally, especially girls.

49. The rate of youth crime is low in comparison with other London boroughs. The number of first timers in the justice system is decreasing and below similar authorities. Young people aged 10 – 17 are less likely to be victims of crime than in the rest of London. In 2005/06, the Youth Offending Team achieved a figure of 75% of young offenders in education, training or employment, which is better than the national average. The pattern on final warnings, reprimands and convictions for looked after children is now in line with the national average. Participation of looked after children in care planning is very good. Children with disabilities are able to contribute to service planning with excellent consultation and participation processes in place. There are excellent examples of integration and specialised support to facilitate inclusion.

50. Children and young people are able to achieve economic well being and are prepared well for working life.

51. Services in RBKC to promote economic well-being are good. RBKC and partners work well together to support families and young people's economic development. There is excellent language support and the quality of post-16 education is good. The Central London Connexions service, led by RBKC and graded as excellent by Ofsted, works extensively with a wide range of agencies to support young people. This service is highly valued with good evidence of integrated services to meet diverse needs across the borough. Success rates for level 3 programmes such as AS/A levels and VCE are above national and neighbour averages. Progression and participation to further and higher education are good. The overall level 2 and 3 qualification profile for young people aged 19 living in the borough is satisfactory and generally in line with statistical neighbours. RBKC is strengthening the strategy for levels 1 and 2 provision and access to vocational and skills training. RBKC offers good community initiatives through very good partnership arrangements. Strategies and management of the housing service are good. Support for looked after children and children with disabilities to achieve economic well-being is good.

The impact of local public services

Being healthy

52. The work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is outstanding.

53. Health services are readily accessible with creative approaches to support vulnerable parents from diverse communities. There is a sharp focus on prevention and multi-agency working involving the voluntary sector and local communities to tackle health inequalities. Joint work across the borough to empower parents to participate in decisions on health and child development is outstanding. Access to early speech and language services is making a positive difference to children's language development. Immunisation rates for young children remain below the national average but there is an increase in the MMR vaccination rate. Chlamydia infection is above the national average. There is excellent collaboration with the Genito-urinary medicine unit enabling 48-hour appointment for borough residents. There is also a pilot scheme with Boots pharmacists to provide emergency contraceptive advice and chlamydia screening. These steps are having positive impact.

54. Health visitors offer excellent support for first time mothers. Infant and perinatal mortality rates are low in comparison with other London boroughs. Enhanced maternity provision is well co-ordinated and provides accessible support to expectant mothers including choice for home or hospital delivery. GPs work closely with midwives to ensure effective health screening and health promotion are implemented. Expectant mothers with a known history of depression are carefully monitored and are well supported. Teenage pregnancy has been reduced and remains comparatively low.

55. The joint strategy to improve the health of all children and young people in the borough is well established. Healthy eating is being actively promoted in all settings with high impact. A high percentage of young people in the Tellus survey indicated that they felt positive about their health and what contributes to healthy lifestyles. Effective project work in the borough, supported by all partners and based on "Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do it!" (MEND) programme, is reducing the level of obesity in 8-12 year olds. Children and young people and their parents and carers who were seen during this review demonstrated very good awareness of health issues. There is good evidence that the range of sports activities in RBKC is having enhanced impact on the physical health of children and young people. The play strategy, recently launched in the borough, facilitates the coordination of play activities and healthy lifestyles. Most youth centres have accessible sporting facilities to encourage hard-to-reach groups, such as young Muslims, to participate in activities.

56. The number of mothers initiating breastfeeding in RBKC is significantly higher than the London and national averages. Dental services for children and young people are good and generally available across the borough, although

take up remains low. Oral health amongst some groups, particularly children and young people who have newly arrived in the borough, is poor. Considerable effort is being made by the PCT and partners to target vulnerable children and dentists are visiting primary schools to help encourage better dental care and improve uptake. The borough has established robust anti-smoking strategies. School nurses work effectively with schools and other healthcare professionals and agencies to deliver health promotion programmes. These are very well planned and co-ordinated.

57. The hospital health link team ensures that children with long-term illness and complex needs receive effective care and emotional support when discharged from hospital. Staff working with children and young people have access to excellent advice and are well supported in identifying possible child safeguarding and protection issues. Clear referral routes exist where risk is identified. All children attending the accident and emergency department are monitored to ensure safeguarding measures are covered. The health link team and CAMHS work together to ensure that young people who might self-harm and those involved in substance misuse receive appropriate help. Access to CAMHS is excellent with no waiting times for assessment or treatment. This service has beacon status and provides a number of outreach drop-in sessions in schools and clinics, enabling self-referral and early support.

58. Health outcomes for looked after children in RBKC are good with most making positive use of the extensive health services available to them. The percentage of looked after children who are also mothers is comparatively low and this is consistent with concurrent work to reduce the level of teenage pregnancies. Health services for children with disabilities are well co-ordinated with more services being provided in mainstream settings. The arrangements for the transition of disabled children into primary school are outstanding. Parents and carers receive good training on lifting and handling from a range of agencies including the voluntary sector.

Staying safe

59. The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is outstanding.

60. In the Tellus survey, most children reported that they felt at least quite safe and some felt very safe. There are effective procedures and excellent inter-agency working in place to ensure that those most at risk are safeguarded. There is a high rate of referrals compared with similar authorities and a high response rate to referrals through assessment. The range of preventative and family support services available is outstanding. The number of children on the child protection register is lower than that of similar authorities. All children on the child protection register are allocated a qualified social worker. High priority is given to supporting parents and family support services are well resourced and well targeted to those most in need. A range of

interventions is available when children are at risk of becoming looked after. Family group conferences are being used extensively.

61. The borough observes its statutory responsibilities for all looked after children up to, and beyond, the age of 18 years and all benefit from the supervision of qualified social workers. Outcomes for looked after children in relation to staying safe are excellent. Placement stability and the rate of placements with foster/adoptive carers for children are both very good. Placement stability for older groups of young people is influenced by the unusual profile of looked after children in the borough and the high percentage of asylum seeking young people in need. Permanence is being achieved for many looked after children either through adoption, kinship placements, or long-term foster care. Residential care is of excellent quality and targeted appropriately. The safeguarding of children with disabilities is effectively promoted with comprehensive assessment and care planning.

62. Children and young people and their families are well informed about their general safety in the community. Information is available to parents and children about risks in the home and in the community, including information about domestic abuse. Effective harassment and anti-bullying measures are in place and are promoted throughout schools. Road safety has improved through work in schools and the number of children involved in road accidents has reduced considerably.

63. Those most at risk from abuse are well protected by well established inter-agency collaboration and professional practice. All child protection and looked after children cases are allocated to qualified social workers. Child protection procedures are managed and audited effectively, and the quality of recording of information is good. There is a comprehensive set of inter-agency policies and procedures in place. There are also additional local documents in place, as required, such as a policy on risk assessment and sexual exploitation. There are regular updates on policy. Local policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated and all new staff are required to cover these in the induction process. The LSCB commissions a programme of training on safeguarding including inter-agency induction training and specific topics: attendance figures show evidence of good coverage across the agencies and of positive evaluation.

64. Family support services are widely available across the area and are proactively used to intervene early to prevent harm to children and to continue to support children and young people when there have been concerns. Children and young people, and their parents or carers, are fully involved in discussions and decision making about child protection issues with more than 90% of parents attending child protection conferences. There is evidence from case records and from correspondence with parents that parents, children and young people are actively involved in safeguarding processes.

65. The referral and assessment procedures for vulnerable children and young people are excellent with most referrals receiving a prompt and effective response. A very high rate of assessments are completed in response to referrals. This results from the close and effective working relationships, which exist across agencies and the consistent and clear understanding of thresholds. Most assessments are completed within required timescales and the performance management system identifies any delays to the relevant manager. The quality of assessment particularly core assessments is very high with a clear focus on the child's needs identified across the five outcomes. There is a well established audit and review process.

66. The council developed its own electronic case recording system some years ago and this well embedded system for children's social care enables effective performance monitoring and audit of work. Good progress is being made in integrating IT systems across key agencies. Reviews of work are regularly and routinely completed and these allow performance and practice issues to be identified and resolved. The council has developed an integrated children's recording system and intends to introduce this in April 2007.

67. There is a robust approach to safe employment practices and Criminal Records Bureau checks are completed across the council and other agencies routinely with provision for regular rechecking in place. Recruitment to key posts is excellent. Multi-agency public protection arrangements to monitor serious offenders in the community are in place through an agreed protocol. Protocols with the police are securely in place for missing children and supported by excellent practice. The Education Welfare Service has clear guidance for schools and parents about attendance and children missing from education with full reference to safeguarding requirements. There is information widely available for the public about private fostering and notification requirements.

68. For looked after children, placements are effectively supervised and reviewed, and carers receive good support. Recruitment of carers is considered difficult within the borough because of socio-economic and housing factors, and the borough makes extensive use of independent fostering agency placements. These are currently all individually purchased from a range of agencies. The use of residential care for looked after children is below comparator councils, and the reduction in recent years in looked after children costs is largely due to less reliance on external residential placements. Local residential care provision is of excellent quality and offers an effective outreach service.

69. The safeguarding of children with disabilities is effectively promoted, and assessment and care planning is comprehensive. Access to direct payments for parents is progressing well. Packages of care are comprehensive and include play and leisure needs. The council has surveyed parental views on service priorities, and has included a range of provision in the re-commissioning of short-term residential breaks such as play, holiday, and after school support.

Enjoying and achieving

70. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is outstanding.

71. Parents and carers receive good support and guidance to help their children enjoy play, recreation and to achieve well at school. Good information is available for example, on school admissions. The parent partnership service, delivered by 'Full of Life', a parent led voluntary organisation, provides valuable information and advocacy for those parents and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The quality of childcare and early years provision is good overall and early years settings provide very well for children to enjoy and achieve. Strategic planning is good, consequently there is a good supply of childcare and all 3 and 4 year olds have access to nursery places. The borough has taken a thoughtful, sensitive approach to developing early years provision based on a very good understanding of the needs of the community and which builds on existing provision in the area.

72. Support for schools and school improvement is very good. In January 2006, one primary school was judged by Ofsted to require special measures. This broke the excellent track record of never having any schools in this category of concern. The local authority had a keen awareness of the strengths and areas for development of the school and has subsequently increased the level of support to this and other schools causing concern. Due to continuing efforts of the school and the council, good progress has been made and confirmed by two HMI visits. There are strong indications that the school will be removed from special measures in spring 2007. Additionally, very positive steps have been taken to learn from this situation and to apply the learning across schools generally in RBKC. This well differentiated approach provides a good focus on under performance. A good balance of support and challenge is provided to schools through, for example the annual review of their performance. Schools value very highly the support they receive from school improvement advisers and their work is well integrated with that of other agencies, such as the Education Welfare Service.

73. Educational attainment overall is outstanding. Historically, RBKC has provided successful schools and shown strong commitment to raising standards with an impressive record of securing year on year improvements in educational outcomes. For example, at Key Stage 1 a high proportion of children are new arrivals to this country and many are in the early stages of learning English. Children's attainment has been consistently in line with those in similar areas. To improve outcomes in this area the local authority has implemented an intensive support and training programme. This has resulted in significant improvements in reading and writing and children in the area are now achieving better overall than those in comparable areas. Support for children and young people from BME communities who are vulnerable to underachievement is very good. The Language Development Service has a key role in this work.

Programmes are developed that are closely tailored to local needs and a dedicated central budget is set aside for this work. For example, children not fluent in English are able to broaden their vocabulary through attending lunchtime clubs and taking part in programmes of activity that include drama and cookery.

74. Plans are being implemented in RBKC to address the lack of secondary school places for local children in borough. Giving priority to pupils in local primary schools is expected to result in a further increase in the number of local children attending the local community secondary school. They now constitute 80% of the school's intake. Furthermore, a new secondary school is due to open in 2009 further increasing access to a local school place for those who live in the area. Schools are very positive about school place planning and the co-ordination of admissions and those without a school place reduced by 45% between March 2005 and March 2006.

75. Attendance at school is good overall. In primary schools unauthorised absence from school is well below that in other similar areas although authorised absence is a little higher. In secondary schools attendance is very good. There is some variation in the levels of attendance between schools and the local authority continues to have an appropriate focus on this area. Schools reported very good support for attendance issues from the Education Welfare Service. Few children and young people are excluded from schools in RBKC. In the primary sector exclusions are well below comparator areas and the levels found nationally. In the secondary sector fixed-term exclusions are below the levels found elsewhere but proportionally, permanent exclusions are higher. Although the actual numbers of those excluded are low the reduction in permanent exclusions has been modest. The council has identified that the needs of a small group of students who are not currently receiving their full entitlement to education should be met in new ways and has agreed significant additional resources to extend provision for them. Those educated at the hospital school receive excellent support both for their education and their broader needs.

76. There is a high priority placed on voluntary learning, recreation, sport and play provision in the area. The Tellus survey revealed that a significantly greater proportion of children and young people than elsewhere feel that there is much to do locally. These activities are delivered through a comprehensive network of providers, including those from the voluntary and community sector. Good opportunities are provided through the youth service for young people's personal and social development, including for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Many young people make good progress through their involvement in voluntary learning and the youth service provides a wide range of these activities. Schools provide some excellent extra curricula activities that contribute significantly to children and young people's development as individuals and as members of the community.

77. Support for looked after children's education is very good. There is effective monitoring at all Key Stages and attainment levels for looked after children are good against national comparators. Looked after children's attendance is satisfactory and matches those in similar areas. Personal education plans are good and are effectively audited and there is good capacity to assess and fund additional tuition and educational support needs. Corporate parenting enables an effective dialogue between the council and young people, but there is scope for councillors and senior officers working together to have a greater impact at the operational level, particularly in areas of performance that are slow to improve, for example school attendance. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported to enjoy their education and achieve well. School inspections show that children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. The local authority has worked effectively to increase the number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are receiving education in mainstream settings and clear guidance is in place for schools for supporting those students. The local authority has been successful in reducing the use of statements for special educational needs. Many children and young people with complex difficulties, particularly those with severe behavioural difficulties or autism, are placed outside RBKC in neighbouring London boroughs, as there is a lack of specialised provision to meet their needs.

Making a positive contribution

78. The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is outstanding.

79. Children and young people are given excellent support to develop socially and emotionally. A wide range of programmes and activities are used effectively to raise awareness of self and community from the earliest of ages. There is good support for all children and young people to manage changes and respond to challenges in their lives and outstanding support for a number of vulnerable groups including teenage parents, Traveller children and BME children and young people, including asylum seekers and refugees. RBKC is amongst the first in the country to publish a play strategy that has also been endorsed by children and young people. This is seen as an underpinning activity for children's services across the borough. Parents report positively about programmes they have been involved in that support them to maintain or re-establish good relationships with their children. The borough is currently exploring the establishment of a parenting academy that will be accessible to all parents.

80. The voluntary sector is used well to provide a range of services to help children, young people and their parents or carers, to cope with traumatic events and major changes in their lives as well as to raise their aspirations. There is, for example, a well established counselling and play therapy service operating through the Catholic Children's Society available to both primary and secondary schools, a highly regarded and targeted programme to raise the

aspirations of disadvantaged young people in the most disadvantaged wards. The Moroccan Community Welfare Group provides a specific course on healthy lifestyles for young women to assist them to re-engage with learning. Careful thought has been given to the development of programmes that will engage the hard to reach groups. A wide range of partners including the police, health and social services support programmes through schools and the youth service that directly tackle drug, alcohol and substance misuse as well as sexual health and personal safety. There is a programme for young carers run by the voluntary sector that has provided opportunities to meet with peers and to have a break from caring at an annual three-day residential event and more regular group meetings.

81. The involvement of children and young people in decision making and in supporting the community is outstanding. The borough was one of the first in the country, and the first in London, to achieve the advanced Hear by Right standards. RBKC has absolute commitment to seeking out the views of all potentially hard to reach groups. Services are encouraged and supported to integrate processes for gaining the views of individuals about how they are affected by their provision and regular satisfaction surveys are undertaken that lead directly to service improvement. The CYPP was modified in the light of skilful consultation with young people which included considerable involvement in a photographic competition around the borough and presentations from young people directly to cabinet members.

82. There is a vibrant youth forum that brings together young people with a wide range of different perspectives. In addition to being used as a sounding board for developments in provision its members contribute effectively and sensitively to decisions on bids for grant funding and are involved in key appointments that affect them. This has included full participation in the appointment of the executive director of family and children's services. School councils are also highly effective in engaging young people in influencing their environment. Volunteering and direct support to the community is encouraged through a range of activities and is particularly strong within the youth service. The youth service is providing good support to vulnerable groups. There is a clear focus on early identification and intervention to prevent anti-social behaviour. The high visibility of police community support officers has been identified by young people and some schools as being important in encouraging positive behaviour, as are close contacts between the police and individual schools. There are a wide range of cultural, sporting and study activities out of school hours that are successfully used to engage young people in positive activities and divert them from either being involved in, or the victims of, crime. These operate before and after school and during the school holidays, are well attended and readily accessible through play centres, voluntary sector organisations and the youth service. Particularly successful are the extensive positive activities for young people such as programmes run in the school holidays by the youth service.

83. Changes over the last year in the Youth Offending Team have secured greater clarity of direction and are leading to well targeted action being taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people. A range of agencies have helped identify those most likely to be at risk to ensure that projects, such as the Youth Inclusion Project (YIP) in the St Charles ward, have been able to target their resources most effectively. The Youth Offending Team has extremely close and effective links with the police that have enabled them both to increase the focus of their work to take account of the impact of crime. Similarly, Connexions has secured access to excellent advice and guidance for young offenders that is based on the personal advisers' comprehensive knowledge of the education, training and employment opportunities. The Youth Offending Team gym has been extremely successful in supporting young offenders to develop self-esteem and confidence in their ability to change.

84. Looked after children are consulted on a range of issues and there is good access to advocacy services when required and complaints are handled appropriately with good analysis of issues of concern in annual reports. There is good awareness across the borough of the importance of enabling children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make a positive contribution. Schools are complimentary about the provision of services to support this group of pupils and there are some outstanding examples of service integration whereby young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully integrated into key activities such as the youth forum. There is a thriving volunteer programme that supports a dedicated weekly session for disabled young people at the Lancaster youth centre. Parents and carers of disabled children are recognised as key advocates for their inclusion and are encouraged to be fully involved in strategic thinking and planning as well as in direct provision. Careful thought is given to preparing young people and any receiving organisations at times of transition and the transition protocol at 14+ is designed to ensure that no young person slips through the net. The Connexions service is particularly valued for its specialist work in this area and there is good engagement of social care services to support families, including the provision of direct payments.

Achieving economic well-being

85. The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good.

86. Action taken to support families in maximising their economic well-being is good. There are sufficient nursery places in the borough as a whole with work currently being undertaken to ensure these are suitably matched to the wards with greatest demand. Provision for children with disabilities is particularly good. RBKC and its partners are very committed to finding ways to promote the economic well-being of young people and ensure that all families have access to good quality information on available services. RBKC has particularly effective measures for people where English is a second language. RBKC and its partners

recognise that unemployment rates in the north of the borough remain relatively high and have developed clear strategies to engage families in services to support training and ambition. Local initiatives to support teenage mothers are particularly good. Accessible adult education is developing well and currently offers satisfactory provision. RBKC has the lead role to introduce a much clearer focus on improving education to address adult economic well-being. RBKC has targeted resources to enhance language, literacy and numeracy training and ICT skills. Effective voluntary services, part funded by RBKC, offer pre-employment and basic skills training that is linked to the local job centre. A new job centre in the north of the borough involving a range of partners and located in an area of relatively high unemployment is having a good impact on improving the economic well-being of vulnerable groups.

87. Joint work to prepare young people aged 11-19 for working life is very good. Education and training for 11–19 year olds is also good. Providers of services which support economic well-being are suitably challenged by the council to focus provision and are well supported by the council. Participation and success rates for GCSE and AS/A/VCE level provision are excellent and are significantly above neighbour and national averages. Progression rates to further and higher education are very good. RBKC sets high standards and delivers good quality services to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and inclusion and this is well regarded by schools and other service users. The Connexions service is excellent and highly respected. Local provision is very well planned and RBKC and partners are further increasing the integration of services. Teenage mothers are well supported and encouraged back into employment, education or training. Unemployment for 16-19 year olds is 2.3%, the lowest of any London borough. Individual support, careers information and advice and guidance in schools are good and well targeted. Arrangements for the support and advice for young people at key points of transition are good.

88. There is a clear and effective strategy by the borough and partners to reduce the number of young people not in employment, education or training and to help them gain a positive personal and learning experience. Targeting of young offenders and teenage mothers is particularly effective. Mixed race or black young people are more likely to be represented in area not in education, employment or training figures when compared to other central London boroughs.

89. The quality of 16-19 education and training is good. Arrangements for year 10 and 11 students to access work experience are adequate. Community regeneration initiatives to address the needs of children and young people are available with many good examples in the areas of greatest need. There is a very positive approach to improvements to develop dilapidated or poor quality community environments into small business units or community venues.

90. Action taken to ensure that vulnerable young people have decent housing is good. RBKC has an excellent housing department with clear strategies for future developments, good leadership and strong management of service. The decent homes standard is well advanced and set for early completion of government targets within two years. There are very good partnership arrangements with local communities to help families and young people to access suitable housing. A recent review of procedures to allocate housing has placed greater focus on meeting local family and young peoples' needs.

91. The RBKC housing department uses its influence well to improve housing for families and young people. For example, new planning applications for social housing are guided towards increasing bedroom numbers to accommodate larger families; improved management information systems are being installed to give greater awareness of housing performance leading to improved future strategies for further developments. Housing initiatives, such as young persons *night stop* will link to the Connexions service and integrate with education, job training and the health service. RBKC has more housing units for young people at risk and leaving care than London and national averages.

92. The help for looked after children and young people to achieve economic well-being is good. Most young people are given excellent support to develop their language and employment skills through training and education. At the age of 16 looked after young people in RBKC have a comparatively higher chance of being in employment, education or training. RBKC has beacon status for services to care leavers. Services are effective and accessible. The number of care leavers in employment, education or training is very good and is significantly better than London and national averages.

93. Help for children and young people with disabilities to achieve economic well-being is good. Strong support is provided that is sensitively integrated with the Connexions service. Recruitment services specialise in helping people with disabilities into employment. It is recognised there is a shortage of foundation and level 1 provision for young people with disabilities and this being taken forward by partners in the borough.

Service management

94. The management of services for children and young people is outstanding.

95. The ambitions of the council and its partners for children and young people are excellent. Effective strategic leadership is being provided by the council and partners. The council, with its partners, has developed clear and consensual aims, mission, vision and priorities for children and young people. The Family and Children's Strategic Partnership benefits from well established strong relationships amongst partners and has wide representation from partner organisations. There is a culture of ambition and high expectations for children and young people throughout the borough. There is a shared vision on the development and implementation of integrated services for children in

RBKC. Ambitions reflect the involvement and contribution from the local community and key stakeholders.

96. The family and children's strategic partnership has produced a high quality CYPP which outlines a clearly stated and challenging vision for children and young people. There is a particular emphasis on the centrality of the role of families in achieving the best possible outcomes for all children. It determines an impressive range of strategies to be undertaken by the council and its partners, and is based on a clear understanding of local needs, an analysis of service quality and gaps and the views of parents, children and young people. The council exercised its freedoms and flexibilities and took additional time to ensure full stakeholder input. The plan demonstrates good links and clear alignment of targets between the community strategy, the Local Area Agreement and the corporate plan.

97. The council and its partners have opted for a Children's Trust model that involves the formal integration of the PCT's community healthcare services and is making progress with the development of children's centres and extended schools facilities. The council and partners have the appropriate processes in place for translating joint ambitions into action, although the timescale remains challenging. The council also has the financial strength and capacity to make these ambitions realistic and attainable. The council will invest substantially over the next three years in a number of major projects for children and young people, including a new secondary school and new academy in the borough.

98. Prioritisation is outstanding. The outcomes for children and young people are given appropriately high prominence within the priorities of the cabinet business plan, the community strategy and the CYPP. Spending on children's services is above the level suggested by central government and there is a clear corporate commitment to children's services. The priorities are based on a clear articulation of need and gaps in provision and reflect a good balance between national and local priorities. Health priorities are well focused on the needs of the area and the reconfiguration of services is underway to meet these needs. All council projects and services are shaped by extensive community consultation, with the authority making significant efforts to engage with a wide range of residents including hard to reach groups. It dedicates resources to priority activities and maintains a focus on them to ensure successful delivery.

99. The track record of the council and its partners on achieving their priorities is excellent. Examples of positive working include: an effective early years service; the schools, the teenage pregnancy service; well developed communications with children who are looked after by the council; a good youth service, an innovative play strategy, exemplary recording and assessment systems, robust systems to safeguard vulnerable children and well developed Connexions and CAMHS.

100. The capacity of the council and its partners to deliver better outcomes for children and young people is good. Historically the council has had a good track record of systematically building its capacity to meet national and local demands and improve performance and standards. This is being continued effectively in building capacity to meet the new children's agenda. There is outstanding strategic capacity and leadership at a senior level, both corporately and within children's services and clarity of political and professional leadership. The establishment of a new senior management team has introduced a new impetus to leadership, secured new momentum and is providing effective management of the changes to which frontline staff are committed. The council has used specialist support from external consultants and has added project management capacity to drive through the implementation process.

101. The council has adopted a range of effective actions in order to tackle capacity issues in relation to the retention and recruitment of support staff, social workers and teachers. Measures have included the use of recruitment managers, targeted recruitment campaigns and the improvement of career paths. The council therefore does not have any serious staff shortages that could affect service delivery, and the staffing capability within the organisation is good. Progress in developing an overarching council-wide workforce plan setting out how the council and partners will meet its medium to long-term needs has been slow, and a systematic workforce skills/gap analysis has not been fully completed. Departmental human resource strategies, including children's services, are in place. The arrangements for safe recruitment practice are excellent.

102. There are many good examples of partnership and multidisciplinary working, including CAMHS, services for looked after children and child protection, the Connexions partnership and work with the police on crime and anti-social behaviour. There are good examples of sharing resources, pooling or aligning of budgets with other agencies. The council is developing formalised partnership arrangements with health partners through the proposed strategic partnership model, which will clarify joint working and delivery arrangements. Progress has been restricted because of the financial deficit in the PCT which is now subject to a recovery plan. This presents a challenge but is not preventing good progress towards greater service integration.

103. Current arrangements for service commissioning for children and young people are adequate. However, the council and partners have acknowledged the need to establish more effective joint commissioning arrangements and plan to make this the core activity of the Children's Trust from spring 2007. This will enhance and build capacity into partnership working. Financial management within families and children's is very effective. There is a track record of using financial benchmarks and unit cost comparisons within children's services. Financial discipline and budget management and control processes are robust. The necessary corrective action is being taken to deal with any projected overspends for example the appropriate action taken to reduce the significant overspend on the children's placement budget in 2004/05. An effective

approach to risk management is in place and informing the effective development of children's services in RBKC.

104. Services for children and young people represent good value for money. Costs are comparatively high, but the quality of most services is excellent. The emphasis on prevention is likely to reap longer-term rewards in terms of good outcomes and the joint investment in the services now is seen as a very tangible commitment by all partners. There are a few areas of high expenditure such as transport, learning difficulties and/or disabilities out of borough placements and PRU provision that require further scrutiny, and these are being brought within an effective and systematic review programme. There are a comparatively large number of schools in RBKC carrying high balances, but the council is making suitable progress on the introduction of a claw back system and standards for financial management in schools to strengthen the school challenge process. The council has clear plans to increase the number of local children attending the local community school.

105. Performance management is very good. There are well established performance management systems and processes within social care and education services and there is an effective performance driven culture. There are good examples of the council dealing with areas of service underperformance for example the improvements in the youth service. Performance management arrangements across the children and family partnership as a whole are being developed and will benefit from the strengthening of joint commissioning arrangements. There is wide understanding of performance management within family and children's services, with exemplary examples of recording systems and monitoring systems that enable managers to evaluate progress against agreed priorities. Scrutiny arrangements within children's services meet required standards and are being further refined by linking the work programme to priorities and extending the scrutiny brief. There are examples of performance information, complaints and user feedback being used systematically to inform and improve service delivery. The drive to engage users in service planning and design is impressive and evident at every level of operations. Children's services is introducing stronger service planning processes and quality assurance to ensure even greater consistency and focused targeting of resources on identified need.

106. The capacity to improve is outstanding. The record of continuous improvement in RBKC is impressive and this is clearly being sustained. There is considerable momentum to shape services in ways that are responsive to need and to build on well embedded and successful services. Staffing capacity is good and resources have been made available to deliver priorities for service development. Plans to extend integration are robust and are likely to offer further opportunities to use resources in new and better ways.

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

1. The overall effectiveness of the council's children's services is outstanding. Most services for children and young people are excellent and impact positively on outcomes for children and young people in the borough. The council has an excellent record in the provision of children's services and continues to build on this to meet the challenges of more integrated ways of working. The council has formed effective partnerships to deliver integrated services across the borough, to meet the diverse needs in the borough and to respond quickly to changing demands. Priorities set are realistic and being achieved. Councillor commitment to strong services is excellent and underpinned by the effective use of resources.

2. Health services for children, young people and families are outstanding, despite the fact that the Trust has been operating with a financial deficit. The deficit is being reduced following a review of priorities and impact. The general support given to parents and carers to keep their children healthy is excellent. The council, with health partners, has established very exciting projects to raise health awareness. Health provision for looked after children and children with disabilities is of high quality. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) has beacon status. The integrated support for children and young people with disabilities is also very effective.

3. The overall contribution to keeping children and young people safe is outstanding. Children and young people who are most at risk are protected well through good inter-agency collaboration and well managed procedures. The recording systems in place are exemplary. Assessments are thorough and integrated with a clear focus on risk management. The CYPP highlights the importance of the family in the community reflected in the development of strong local preventative services. All child protection and looked after children cases are allocated to qualified social workers who have good support and supervision and training. Support for looked after children is excellent

4. Education services are outstanding. Very good progress has been made in developing the quality of universal services and developing and implementing preventative services to reduce levels of vulnerability, for example for looked after children and those from BME communities who may be at greater risk of underachievement. There is very good support provided for pupils from a range of council services including the education welfare and educational psychology service. Schools place the highest value on the support that they receive from the council. Schools identified that 49% of services from the council had improved from the previous year. The capacity to build on these achievements and improve services further is good. The council has an excellent focus on voluntary learning, recreation, sport and play provision in the area. As a result children and young people have much to do locally. They value highly the opportunities outside of school and benefit from them.

5. The overall contribution of services in helping children and young people, including looked after children and children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to contribute to society is outstanding. The council, with partners, is committed to the involvement and participation of children and young people in planning services. Excellent examples of effective participation exist across the borough in most settings. The borough was one of the first in the country, and the first in London, to achieve the advanced Her by right standards. Young people and schools have identified high police visibility and police community support officers as being important in encouraging positive behaviour in RBKC.

6. Opportunities for children and young people to achieve economic well being and prepare for working life are good. The council and partners have robust arrangements in place to support families and young people's economic development. There is excellent language support for children and young people and the quality of post-16 education is either good or better. The Connexions service is excellent and works extensively with a wide range of agencies to support young people to achieve economic well being. This service is highly valued and developing more ways to integrate its services with other agencies. Progression to and participation in further and higher education are also very good. Strategies for and the management of the housing service are excellent. The council provides excellent support for looked after children and children with disabilities to achieve economic well-being.

7. The management of council services is outstanding evidenced by the high performance in all key areas in the delivery of effective children's services. The CYPP is imaginative and fully supported by all partners in the borough. This sets challenging but achievable objectives for services which are being systematically realised. The Children's Trust will be operational in spring 2007 and will be the key body for joint service commissioning. The safeguarding board is operational and proving to be an effective forum for the development of safeguarding initiatives. The culture for performance management is strong and reinforced by extended scrutiny arrangements. The workforce in children's services is of high calibre. The council has an outstanding track record of creating capacity to deliver high quality services and there is political intent to maintain this impetus.