

# Joint area review

**South Gloucestershire Children's Services Authority Area**

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Review of services for children and young people

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

**Age group:** All

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## Introduction

1. The most recent annual performance assessment (APA) for South Gloucestershire judged the council's children's services as good and its capacity to improve as good.
2. This report assesses the contribution of local services in ensuring that children and young people:
  - at risk or requiring safeguarding are effectively cared for
  - who are looked after achieve the best possible outcomes
  - with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve the best possible outcomes.
3. The following investigations were also carried out:
  - the impact of the partnership on empowering children and young people to contribute to service provision and to the development of their local community
  - the quality of the partners' strategy for addressing high levels of teenage pregnancy.

## Context

4. South Gloucestershire is a diverse mixed urban and rural authority in the south west of England covering 49,700 hectares with a population of about 254,500. The area incorporates long-established urban communities, market towns, small villages and substantial new developments. Approximately 60% of the authority's total population lives in the built up areas immediately adjoining Bristol. Around 4.2% of the population are of Black and minority ethnic heritage, of which the largest groups are Indian, Chinese, Mixed White and Black Caribbean and Caribbean. There is also a small Gypsy and Traveller population of about 80 families resident in the area. Employment rates are significantly higher in South Gloucestershire than elsewhere in the west of England and about 10% above national rates.

5. Pre-school education is provided in 93 full day nurseries, eight maintained and three independent nursery classes, 43 sessional nurseries and 11 Sure Start children's centres.

6. Pre-16 education is provided through 94 maintained primary and 15 maintained secondary schools, one academy, two independent schools, three special schools and a single, split-site pupil referral unit.

7. Post-16 education and training is provided in all secondary schools and the academy, two further education colleges and by four work-based training providers. Entry to Employment provision is managed by Filton College and Kingswood Training Services Ltd, a local consortium controlling 190 places. Adult and community learning (including family learning in priority neighbourhoods) is provided by the Community Learning Service of South Gloucestershire Council in partnership with local schools and colleges.

8. The sole provider of primary care is South Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust (PCT), which provides 28 general practices (GP) and health centres. Acute hospital services are provided by North Bristol NHS Trust from two hospitals – Frenchay Hospital being the only one with an accident and emergency department. Mental health services are provided by Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust.

9. Child social care services are provided through nine field social work teams, one family centre and 114 foster carers. At the time of the inspection, 82 children had a child protection plan and 173 children were looked after by the council. Of the latter, around 30 young people live in residential accommodation commissioned from independent providers.

10. There is one Secure Unit (Vinney Green) managed by the Children and Young People's Service and one prison and young offenders institution (Ashfield), which operates under a 25-year private finance initiative contract with the Youth Justice Board of England and Wales.

11. Services to children and young people who are at risk of offending or have offended are provided through the South Gloucestershire Youth Offending Team (YOT), a multi-agency partnership and part of the wider community safety partnership, which includes police officers, social workers, probation officers and staff from health and children's services.

## Main findings

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

- Arrangements for safeguarding children and young people are adequate. Early intervention and family support services are good. The most vulnerable children and those in need of protection receive effective services with high quality assessments and planning and good support for young people involved in offending behaviour. However there are weaknesses in the reliability of some data and quality assurance in children's social care and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board's (LSCB) guidance on safe recruitment is not always followed consistently. The LSCB has not scrutinised private fostering arrangements.

- Services for looked after children are good with timely and effective care planning, good stability and good quality care. The quality of social work with children and parents is also good. Health support needs are well met. Excellent education support ensures very good school attendance. Services for care leavers are good with effective pathway planning. The quality of recording of summaries and chronologies on case files is variable.
- Services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. Good multi-agency working ensures that children with more severe and complex difficulties are identified early and receive good assessment and support. The Learning and School Effectiveness Service provides very strong support. Inclusion is very well supported, transition planning is effective and high numbers of young people post-16 years are in education, employment or training. Parents did not find it easy to access information on services and support.
- The impact of the partnership on empowering children and young people to contribute to service provision and to the development of their local community is good. A strong culture of participation, underpinned by a good strategy, ensures a good range of opportunities for children and young people, including those who are more vulnerable, to give their views and influence service delivery. Coordination of activities and use of feedback are not sufficiently developed and there are insufficient outcome targets in the service delivery implementation plan.
- The quality of the partners' strategy for addressing high levels of teenage pregnancy is good and based on thorough analysis. Activities are appropriately targeted and well coordinated. Partnership working at all levels is effective with good involvement of children and young people. However not all targets in the action plan have specific and measurable outcomes.
- Service management is good. Ambitions are clear and challenging and driven by strong leadership and good strategic planning. Engagement with parents, carers, children and young people in shaping priorities and services is good. Resources are allocated effectively to priorities. Capacity and value for money are good. Performance management is adequate. The use of information technology and quality assurance in children's social care and by the LSCB is underdeveloped and the quality of some social care performance data is not consistently robust.

- Capacity to improve is good. Outcomes for most children and young people are good. Most services and performance indicators have continued to improve from a generally high base. The council and its partners are aware of the gaps and barriers to further improvement and are effectively addressing them.

## Grades

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

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

## Recommendations

### For immediate action

The local partnership should:

- ensure that an appropriate way is found for the successful dissemination of the findings of this report to children and young people in the area
- establish more robust systems to enable effective performance management and accurate monitoring and reporting of performance in children's social care
- improve the quality of recording of summaries and chronologies on case files in children's social care
- ensure all private fostering arrangements are identified and take appropriate steps to monitor and support these.

### For action over the next six months

- Ensure all parents and carers of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive information regularly and systematically on available services support.

- Ensure all actions in service delivery implementation plans have specific measurable outcomes.
- Ensure that children and young people who participate in consultations are informed about how their views have influenced developments and raise awareness of this among the wider community.

## Equality and diversity

13. The children and young people's partnership works well to promote and monitor equal opportunities and diversity. South Gloucestershire is currently assessed at Level 3 on the Equality Standard for Local Government. The number of completed equalities impact assessments in children's services is good. Training for officers and elected members emphasises the importance of valuing diversity for children and young people of all ages. Elected members receive regular reports on the education outcomes for children from minority ethnic groups and understand their responsibilities in monitoring these to drive improved outcomes. The attainment of these pupils, including those from Gypsy and Traveller groups, is broadly in line with that of all pupils. Close attention is also paid to the progress and support needs of children in receipt of free school meals who are identified as under-achieving at school. The authority's multi-agency Partnership Against Hate Crime is well established and effective. South Gloucestershire is the lead authority in the Avon Consortium Traveller Education Service (ACTES). The range of projects initiated by ACTES is impressive, ranging from improving access to education while travelling, to challenging stereotypes, site safety and involving children and young people in training for staff in local services.

14. A detailed analysis by the council of the diversity of its Children and Young People's Service's staff (excluding schools) shows that it is making satisfactory progress in increasing the proportion of staff from diverse groups. The proportion of staff from non-White minority ethnic groups rose from 3.5% in 2005–06 to 3.7% in 2006–07.

## Safeguarding



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>High quality of assessments and planning.</p> <p>Good prevention and early intervention work well supported by the very good implementation of the Common Assessment Framework.</p> <p>Child-centred direct work by skilled and committed staff.</p> <p>Good support for young people involved in offending behaviour.</p> <p>Effective child protection planning and practice.</p>	<p>Lack of systematic auditing, evaluation and analysis both within children's social care and across partner agencies.</p> <p>Inaccuracy of some reported performance indicators in children's social care.</p> <p>Safe recruitment guidance is not followed consistently.</p> <p>Lack of scrutiny by the LSCB of private fostering.</p>

16. The APA judged the local authority's arrangements for staying safe as good. There is strong inter-agency partnership work to ensure that the most vulnerable children receive effective services and those in need of protection are identified and receive a prompt and appropriate response. However, weaknesses in the reliability of data, safe recruitment and quality assurance mean that the judgement on safeguarding is only adequate.

17. Services to support young people's health and well-being are generally good. There is satisfactory and improving provision of, and access to, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Drug and alcohol services undertake good preventative work in schools and colleges and ensure effective support for young people with drug or substance abuse problems. As a result admissions to hospital of young people with mental health problems due to substance misuse are well below similar areas and the national average. The involvement of schools in the healthy schools initiative is excellent and has exceeded national targets.

18. Good, well-targeted initiatives are reducing road traffic accidents. The number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents has reduced significantly and has already exceeded the 2010 national target for reduction. An effective anti-bullying programme in schools has been developed with, and in response to, the concerns raised by children. For example, to combat cyber bullying, the council has put in place an effective e-safety strategy which is well supported through training events. The most recent survey of children shows increases in children's enjoyment of school and that most schools take prompt action to deal with bullying.

19. Early intervention and prevention services are good. They have been strengthened by multi-agency locality planning, and include very effective family support services in extended schools and children's centres. There are

good plans to develop these services further with appropriate targeting and continuing good use of voluntary sector provision. The council has positive relationships with schools and good work is done to support children and young people with social and emotional difficulties, for example enabling access to an outstanding sports mentoring project which builds emotional resilience in young people. A wide range of well-managed parenting programmes tailored to meet the needs of parents are available across the area and are underpinned by an effective parenting support strategy. Very good implementation of the Common Assessment Framework together with multi-agency prevention panels enables early identification of support needs for children and families and effective support is put in place. The children's social care teams' move to covering specific geographical areas has improved local partnerships even further. An early evaluation of this move identified the need for more resources and prompt action was taken to put this in place.

20. Identifying and responding to families who are affected by domestic violence is a high priority. Wide-reaching training and awareness-raising of domestic violence has led to an increasing number of families using the effective preventative and early intervention services. The council and its partners are currently reviewing resources to ensure that increased demand for these services is met. The multi-agency risk panels effectively assess levels of risk and ensure appropriate levels of support are put in place. Arrangements to identify the whereabouts of children and young people are sound and include a particular focus on the travelling community.

21. Effective multi-agency work is helping to prevent anti-social behaviour. Children and young people at risk of offending or re-offending are well supported by the YOT. However, the team's work is hampered by the lack of appropriate emergency accommodation resulting in some young people being placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. Access to treatment for mental health and substance misuse difficulties is good. The number of young people who re-offend is significantly lower than similar areas.

22. Current systems, including information technology systems, do not promote effective management oversight or ensure consistently reliable data. Reported data shows that assessments are timely but this is not based on robust data as the number of referrals, re-referrals and the number and timeliness of assessments are not correctly recorded. Satisfactory duty systems are in place to ensure that referrals are responded to appropriately and that children most at risk receive a prompt response. Assessments analysed by inspectors were of very good quality and lead to effective plans which support children well. Core assessments are of high quality but the numbers completed are low and the council has not completed an analysis of the reasons for this.

23. The thresholds criteria for accessing children's social care services is clear and appropriate and good advice is available when there are concerns. Despite this, not all professionals have a clear understanding of the criteria. Good family support services deliver well-targeted assessment and intervention services for

children and their families. The quality of direct work is high and work is child-centred. The emergency duty team provides a satisfactory out-of-hours service which communicates well with other agencies.

24. Children are well protected through appropriate use of good child protection procedures. Fewer children have a second or subsequent child protection plan than in similar authorities, reflecting the effectiveness of the preventative work. All children with child protection plans are allocated to qualified social workers. The system for managing case conferences and planning for children with child protection plans is robust. Conferences are held within the appropriate timescales and effective planning ensures few children remain on the register longer than two years. An effective advocacy service helps children to participate in the child protection processes. This process is robust and the independent chairs offer appropriate challenge to ensure that sound decisions are made to protect children and plan for their future at an early stage

25. The LSCB has very good partnerships, is ambitious, and has taken on its wider safeguarding role. However, its monitoring arrangements are not sufficiently robust. While there is evidence of some good analysis and evaluation, this is not consistent and is undermined by the unreliability of some data. Auditing and evaluation are not carried out systematically, both within children's social care and across partner agencies. However, quality assurance arrangements have recently been strengthened, staffing has increased, a case audit plan is being developed and the LSCB has initiated safeguarding audits across agencies.

26. The LSCB has given a high priority to secure settings and has a specific sub-group which is taking this work forward. The council manages Vinney Green secure unit, which was judged good in its recent inspection. Work to raise the awareness of private fostering has taken place, however this has not been reported to or scrutinised by the LSCB. As a result, the National Minimum Standard in this regard has not been met. Plans are in place to present a report to the LSCB shortly. Currently there are no private fostering placements identified in the area. Sound procedures and protocols have been developed with regard to reviewing child deaths. Multi-agency public protection arrangements are effective. Suitable arrangements are in place across agencies for the management of allegations against staff

27. The LSCB's guidance on safe recruitment is sound but the initial audit of 10 staff files revealed that this was not being consistently followed; three staff did not have appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks in place. The council took immediate and appropriate action to address this including undertaking an audit of all their staff. This identified a further seven cases where staff did not have appropriate checks in place. Immediate action was taken to ensure these staff had no unsupervised contact with children pending appropriate checks being received. Recruitment systems have been strengthened; responsibility for all recruitment of council staff has been moved to children's services human

resources department to ensure consistent application of safe recruitment guidance, and regular staff file audits have been introduced.

28. Staff supervision is good. There is good access to well-targeted and wide-ranging training at all levels including mandatory multi-agency child protection training which is valued by staff.

## Looked after children and young people



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Excellent education support for all young people placed in and out of the area and very good school attendance.</p> <p>Timely and effective assessment, care planning and direct work with children and parents.</p> <p>Comprehensive corporate parenting strategy, well implemented.</p> <p>Effective support for the health of looked after children and young people.</p> <p>Outstanding fostering services.</p> <p>Good services for young people leaving care with high numbers in education, employment or training.</p>	<p>Variable quality of summaries and chronologies in case records.</p> <p>Lack of systematic case audits.</p>

30. The number of children and young people who are looked after has been rising steadily over the past five years but the proportion remains below similar areas. They receive good care from well-trained and supported carers and practitioners. There is a strong approach to corporate parenting and agencies work well together to provide effective, integrated services creating good outcomes for children and young people. The quality of care plans for individual children and young people is good and there are very good arrangements for tracking the progress of each child and young person. This ensures they receive additional support to cope with personal problems and helps them to achieve well at school. All are allocated qualified and experienced social workers. There

is good staff supervision and training, managers offer effective support and there is decisive action to ensure timely decisions. The fostering service was judged outstanding in the most recent inspection. The council was awarded Beacon status in 2008 for 'Improving the Outcomes for Children in Care'.

31. Councillors take their corporate parenting responsibilities seriously. The Corporate Parenting Strategy is wide ranging and elected members and senior officers across the council are committed to supporting looked after children. However, the lack of systematic case file audits means the council cannot be fully confident about the quality of work. The council recognises this and has strengthened quality assurance systems and capacity and plans to undertake regular case file audits to assess the quality of practice.

32. The council works well with its partner agencies to support families and prevent admissions to care. The good range of family support services, overseen by the At Risk of Care Panel ensures that children and young people become looked after only when there are no appropriate alternatives. The Adolescent Support Team works well with teenagers and their families, including providing emergency weekend services, helping to prevent young people coming into care.

33. The health care of looked after young people is good. Almost all had an annual health check in 2006–07. The nurse's post for looked after children was recently extended to full-time. She provides an extremely flexible service for young people and gives helpful advice to foster carers. While looked after children do not have a dedicated mental health service, their access to support with mental health difficulties from CAMHS is satisfactory and there are advanced plans to develop a priority service for them.

34. The quality of social work with parents and children is high, including good assessments, timely decisions, effective case planning and monitoring, with some excellent examples of very sensitive work around adoption placements and support for teenagers. However, the quality of recording of summaries and chronologies on case files scrutinised by inspectors was variable, making it difficult for new staff and managers to ascertain the situation quickly from reading the file.

35. Placement stability is good, although the number of children with three or more moves shows a rising trend. The percentage placed more than 20 miles from their home address is slightly higher than similar authorities (20% compared with 15.8%). However, the council's excellent approach to providing transport and other support services for these children helps to mitigate any disadvantage. The fostering service was judged outstanding in its inspection in 2007. Recruitment, support and training for foster carers are excellent. All residential care is commissioned from other providers, serving around 30 young people. The council participates in a national commissioning network which shares quality assurance information about providers as a basis for placement selection and monitoring. The proportion of children and young people fostered

with relatives or friends has been consistently higher than similar councils since 2000. Support for kinship carers is good and improved by the establishment of a new post providing specialised assessment and support to applicants for Special Guardianship or Residence Orders.

36. Looked after children have excellent support to attend and enjoy school. Coordinated by a secondary and a primary teacher specifically for looked after children, this area of work is supported by a locality manager who is the virtual headteacher. The proportion of looked after children absent from school for 25 days or more in 2006/07 (8.8%) is significantly better than similar councils (17.3%). Effective arrangements minimise fixed-term exclusions and respond to behaviour problems affecting performance in school. There are no permanent exclusions of looked after children.

37. The council knows the individual circumstances and educational progress of each young person and they receive individual learning support when necessary to prepare for public examinations or to prevent exclusions. Support for the small number of young people placed outside the area is excellent and strenuous efforts are made to ensure they receive the necessary educational support. There have been annual fluctuations in the attainment outcomes, reflecting the very small numbers eligible for public examinations at any one time. The percentage of young people leaving care aged 16 or over with at least one GCSE at grade A\* to G or a GNVQ was 51.9%, around the average for similar areas. The 2007 attainment outcomes for looked after children were significantly lower than pupils in general but progress in English, mathematics and science at Levels 4 and 5 are broadly in line with national expectations. There are good opportunities for participation in leisure and cultural activities, including provision of transport.

38. The number of looked after young people who receive final warnings, reprimands and criminal convictions is very small and around the average for similar councils. Almost all children and young people (94%) participate in their reviews, supported where appropriate by a strong advocacy service. Looked after young people are regularly involved in consultations with the Corporate Parenting Group, participate in the review and development of the What Next? programme and contribute to training for councillors and staff. Children and care leavers participate in staff appointments at all levels. Experienced reviewing officers provide effective challenge to social work teams and ensure a consistent overview of care planning.

39. Services for care leavers are good with effective pathway planning. The proportion of looked after young people engaged in education, employment or training is high; 80% compared with 73% in similar areas. The What Next? programme provides good work experience opportunities within the council and is developing an apprenticeship programme. There is a reasonable range of housing provision, and all young people live in appropriate housing.

## Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

Inadequate Adequate Good Outstanding 

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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Good multi-agency work in the identification, assessment and support of children with more severe and complex difficulties.</p> <p>Very good Inclusion Support Service in schools and in the early years.</p> <p>Very low levels of permanent exclusions in special schools</p> <p>Very strong Learning and School Effectiveness Service.</p> <p>Effective planning and support for transition in Year 9</p> <p>High levels of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in education, employment or training.</p>	<p>Parents and carers did not find it easy to access information on available services and support.</p> <p>Transport accessibility.</p> <p>Limited opportunities for developing independent living skills and moving into independence.</p>

41. The children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities implementation plan is an effective and key operational document for progressing the priorities identified within both the Disabled Children's Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). Through the multi-agency Disabled Children's Strategy, partners are effectively brought together to develop the long-term vision. Good use is made of service level agreements with voluntary organisations making a valuable contribution to the range of provision available.

42. Good multi-agency work, usually led by the health service, ensures the early identification and assessment of children with more severe and complex difficulties. Very good palliative work is undertaken by the Life Time Service Nurses and The Jessie May Trust, which works closely with families, schools and other agencies. Specific CAMHS support is available for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and there has been a recent increase in the capacity of the service. The Early Years Inclusion Support Team works very

effectively with area special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) and early years settings to ensure the early identification of children with less severe or emerging needs. A strong focus is put on training and building up the capacity of staff in early years settings. A range of high quality training events, some of which are multi-disciplinary, are provided with the result that staff and SENCOs in these settings are very well qualified.

43. Schools value the very good support provided by the highly qualified Inclusion Support Team. Outreach work from special schools and a behaviour support team ensures that schools receive good quality support across a wide range of needs. Appropriately, service level agreements are in place with the health authority to ensure specialist advice and support for schools in the areas of speech, language and occupational therapy.

44. A good range of courses are provided by the local authority and its partners to assist parents in supporting their child's development and well-being. In addition to focused courses such as 'Meet and Play' for parents of very young children with complex needs and 'Early Bird' for parents of children with autism, more general courses and holiday playschemes are offered. Voluntary organisations such as Hop, Skip and Jump are used very well and offer families additional play opportunities for children and their siblings with severe and complex needs. A varied range of respite care is available for parents and carers including overnight and short break respite. Seventy-four children with disabilities have short breaks with a link family or in a residential setting; all have regular reviews. Increasing use is made of direct payments; the number has risen from 41 in 2007 to 50. This allows parents further flexibility in provision, which they value. A range of helpful information is available for parents including the online '1 Big Database', however they still find it difficult to obtain information and tend to rely on word of mouth. Parents value the setting up of the Parents Reference Group, the link with the Disability Strategy Group, and the supportive network which it promotes.

45. The quality of safeguarding and child protection training is good, with appropriate emphasis on raising awareness of the vulnerability of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This training is well supported by the Child Health and Disability Team (CHAD). Schools and other agencies report positively on its availability and the follow-up procedures which ensure that staff training is kept up-to-date. CHAD provides a good service to those children and young people whose severe difficulties have a significant impact on family functioning. Staff in the CHAD team receive specialist training to assist young people with communication difficulties, which helps to promote their safety. Young people are well supported towards taking responsibility for their own safety and 60% of Year 6 pupils have attended safety education at a life skills centre.

46. The concept of inclusion and early identification of children with special needs is effectively implemented. The percentage of children and young people with a statement of special educational need is marginally lower than national

or statistical neighbour indicators. This has been the trend over recent years. A higher percentage of pupils are placed in mainstream schools and mainstream schools with specialist resource bases than is the case nationally. Furthermore, the rate of appeals to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal (SENDIST) is consistently lower than nationally. Appropriately, independent advocacy services for parents requiring assistance with special educational needs procedures and practice are available through a service level agreement with Supportive Parents and the voluntary organisation Barnardo's. Parents speak well of the work of these organisations. Although the percentage of statements produced within 18 weeks excluding exceptions is very good, the percentage which includes exceptions is less than satisfactory, although very good progress in improving this has been made recently.

47. A very strong and highly regarded Learning and School Effectiveness Service monitors school effectiveness and analyses data to challenge schools, identify and target areas of support and raise standards. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Consistently, fewer pupils fail to reach national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 1 than nationally. This positive trend continues across Key Stages 2 and 3, while at Key Stage 4 a higher percentage of pupils achieve five A\* to C grade GCSEs than nationally. Special schools provide very well for their pupils according to Ofsted inspection outcomes.

48. There have been no permanent exclusions of pupils from special schools in recent years, which is significantly better than national indicators, and fixed-term exclusions are well below national and statistical neighbours. This is impressive. Fixed-term exclusions of pupils at School Action Plus in secondary schools have risen recently, but the authority has quickly analysed the reasons, challenged schools well and put into place a raft of strategies to reverse the trend.

49. A wide range of after-school clubs and out-of-school sports and swimming activities are available across the authority and are suitable and accessible for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some are specifically targeted and some have an inclusion focus. Special schools also offer a good range of lunch hour activities. However, social and leisure clubs are less available, particularly for older young people, and 'accessible' buses and transport are not always available. Plans are well advanced to consult with young people on improving transport and additional funding has been identified to improve access to transport for all young people. The KIDS charity is commissioned to provide paid sessional workers to enable young people to attend individual interest clubs and this is appreciated by young people. An excellent facility is provided by The Bridging Project at Brimsham Green, which has an inclusive ethos and offers a range of well-planned activities.

50. Children and young people are encouraged to make their views known and be involved in influencing their life choices. The Youth Forum and school councils facilitate their voice in the local authority and schools and in one

special school the school council helped decide which clubs and activities are offered within school. The KIDS consultation project feeds into the South Gloucestershire Youth Forum. The vast majority of children and young people attend the annual review of their statement and are helped to contribute their views.

51. Children and young people are well supported at key times of transition in their lives. The Early Years Support Team works well with agencies and SENCOs to ensure that information is efficiently passed on. Likewise, at the end of Year 6, schools report that SENCOs and agencies work effectively together to ensure a smooth transition. In Year 9, clear, well-planned guidance on conducting transition reviews is provided, which schools find helpful. Over 90% of young people in receipt of social care services had a transition plan in place to support their transfer to adult services. Transfer to adult health services is efficiently facilitated. Connexions regularly attend annual reviews and subsequently work very effectively and consistently with schools to ensure that young people get appropriate opportunities for work experience and college courses. Staff at Brimsham Green Bridging Project successfully assist young people in preparing and presenting 'bids' for additional funding such as that provided through the 'Big Stash' fund. This provides good preparation and experience for the transition to work.

52. The vast majority (90%) of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are in education, employment or training. This proportion is marginally higher than the mainstream population. Connexions and the local authority have worked closely with local colleges to ensure that appropriate courses are available for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most young people can obtain work experience, including a limited number of places offered by the council.

53. The Housing Strategy 2003–08 for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in place but arrangements for developing independent living skills and moving into independence are not well developed.

## **Other issues identified for further investigation**

### **The impact of the partnership on empowering children and young people to contribute to service provision and to the development of their local community**

54. **The impact of the partnership on empowering children and young people to contribute to service provision and to the development of their local community is good.**

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>A strong and growing culture of participation which is valued by young people underpinned by a good strategy.</p> <p>Committed and enthusiastic partnership, managers and staff driving participation, particularly in the Youth Service.</p> <p>Opportunities for children and young people to make their voices heard with a higher than average proportion feeling they are encouraged and able to make a difference.</p> <p>A significant influence on the development of their local communities through the views of young people.</p> <p>Improved lives of children and young people through effective projects which young people develop and manage.</p> <p>Engagement of vulnerable groups and children and young people who are more at risk of not being heard.</p>	<p>Insufficient outcome targets to enable the partners to measure progress and effectiveness.</p> <p>Lack of systematic coordination of the wide range of activity.</p> <p>Insufficient feedback on the impact of participation to those taking part, and to children and young people and the wider community.</p>

55. The council and partners have established a strong and growing culture of participation which is valued by young people. At the heart of their vision is the active participation of children and young people in the activities and decision-making processes that affect their lives. They had early involvement in the development of the good strategy and plans which are soundly based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Hear by Rights Standards. Although the partnership has developed an appropriate service delivery implementation plan, this does not contain sufficient outcome targets for the partners to be able to measure effectively the impact of their considerable work; for example, there is no partnership target for children and young people communicating their views apart from looked after children. Managers and staff involved in participation are committed and enthusiastic with good awareness of progress and of what further improvements are required. Their relationship with young people is good. More children and young people responding to surveys feel they are encouraged and able to make a difference than is the case nationally.

56. The council and its partners have made good progress in increasing the influence of children and young people, especially in children's services. The partnership provides a broad range of good opportunities for children and young people to make their voices heard on decisions which affect them. The views of young people are encouraged and collected through a wide variety of mechanisms, including area consultation events, the United Kingdom Youth Parliament, local youth committees and young people's groups representing the views of those with specific needs. There is strong evidence that young people have had significant influence on the development of their local communities in a range of issues including anti-bullying initiatives, developing open spaces, sex and relationship education programmes and 'planning for real' exercises in priority neighbourhoods. All schools have school councils with some good examples of children and young people making a positive impact, enabling students to have a voice both in their school and in their communities.

57. Complaints from or on behalf of children and young people about services are handled quickly and effectively. The number of complaints is reducing with nearly all resolved satisfactorily at an early stage. The partnership ensures full involvement by children and young people in the recruitment of staff, with young people routinely involved in designing job specifications and sitting on recruitment panels across a wide range of functions, particularly those responsible for planning and directly delivering services such as the youth work manager, Connexions personal advisers, participation workers and other senior council employees. The Youth Service, which leads on participation, is highly regarded by children and young people. Young people are involved in all aspects of its work and feel they make a real difference. The lives of children and young people are also improved through effective projects which young people develop and manage, and are well supported by the partnership, for example the Big Stash fund, where young people allocate grant funding to initiatives designed and presented by young people, and the Youth Forum, a voluntary group addressing issues which affect children and young people.

58. Although the drive to increase and improve participation has created a wealth of good initiatives, this wide range of activities is insufficiently coordinated, reducing opportunities to link initiatives, exchange best practice, make best use of communication channels and make most effective use of resources. In addition, feedback to young people and the wider community on the success of the partnership's participation work and the numerous examples where children and young people have made a difference are not used sufficiently or systematically to demonstrate and celebrate the value of engaging with young people and combating negative images. Although feedback to participating young people is sometimes good, particularly in the Youth Service, some young people feel they receive inadequate or no feedback from their involvement. The recent development of the Youth Unlimited website offers a useful mechanism to improve both the coordination of activity and the promotion of participation.

59. The council and partners have developed good support to ensure the engagement of specific vulnerable groups. This includes a dedicated participation worker for children in care, very good participation work with young carers through the Princess Royal Trust and social workers for disabled children receiving specialised training in effective communication. Very good advocacy arrangements enable looked after children and those with child protection plans to make an effective contribution to their reviews and plans. Young people in care are actively involved in the development of the highly valued What Next programme. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are fully involved in planning and bidding for funding at Brimsham Green youth centre. Care leavers have developed and delivered training to staff and councillors in working with looked after children.

60. The council and partners also consult and involve a broader range of children and young people more at risk of not being heard. Young people from rural areas have been engaged through rural youth projects. CAMHS has appointed a dedicated participation worker to work with young people with mental health issues. Black and minority ethnic young people are actively engaged in the existing structures. Vulnerable young people are encouraged to participate through very good targeted support offered by initiatives such as the excellent Breakthrough project, where children and young people shape their programme to meet their individual and very varied needs. Good involvement of young mothers on the development of the Parenting Support Strategy has led to Sure Start funding for four new 'Young Mums' groups'. Children from Traveller families designed a booklet *The Site Detective Safety Book* and a focus group of Traveller children and young people were actively involved in raising awareness with agencies of their experiences and needs.

### **The quality of the partners' strategy for addressing high levels of teenage pregnancy**

61. **The quality of the partners' strategy for addressing high levels of teenage pregnancy is good.**

<b>Major strengths</b>	<b>Important weaknesses</b>
<p>Comprehensive knowledge of vulnerable groups and geographical hot spots based on thorough area analysis.</p> <p>Effective partnership working between the council and its partners both at strategic and operational levels.</p> <p>Well coordinated teenage pregnancy strategy.</p>	<p>Not all targets within the action plan have specific measurable outcomes, making it difficult for the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy Board to effectively monitor impact.</p>

<p>Wide range of appropriately targeted preventative initiatives.</p> <p>Good involvement of young people in development and implementation of the strategy.</p>	
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62. Teenage conception rates in South Gloucestershire have historically been low compared to national average; however, from 2002 to 2005 under-18 conception rates rose steadily with a peak rate of 35.6 per thousand girls aged 15–17 in 2005. The 2007 APA letter reported on this continued rise, which even surpassed the baseline set in 1998. The council and its partners have acknowledged this position; they have set appropriate targets within the CYP to reduce teenage conception rates by 40% and to increase to 60% the proportion of 16–19 year old young mothers in education, employment or training by 2010. Latest validated data for 2006 shows a fall in teenage conceptions from a rate of 35.6 in 2005 (169 conceptions) to a rate of 30.6 in 2006 (149 conceptions), below the 2006 average conception rate of 32.9 for the south west and well below the England average rate of 41.3. The current trend indicates that South Gloucestershire is on target to achieve the 2010 reduction target.

63. The council and its partners have undertaken a thorough analysis of the area and issues leading to high teenage pregnancy rates using appropriate data and national best practice guidance. The partnership is well aware of the localities where there are the highest teenage conception rates and the vulnerable groups of teenagers most at risk of becoming pregnant.

64. A Teenage Pregnancy Partnership Board is well established with good representation from the full range of partners and is taking a strong lead in delivering the effective teenage pregnancy strategy. Partners show strong commitment to their role in tackling teenage pregnancy. The teenage pregnancy partnership officer is a permanent post within the council. Good progress is being made to bring mainstream other key posts, for example the PCT is funding half of the clinical outreach nurse post and half of the teenage pregnancy midwife post, which were both previously funded through the teenage pregnancy implementation grant.

65. This strong integrated partnership has enabled good work at a local level where agencies work collaboratively at front-line level to deliver the strategy. Targets for reducing teenage conception rates are well embedded in all key stakeholder plans and are a top priority in the plans of those localities with high teenage pregnancy rates. The teenage pregnancy partnership officer is a strong champion for the work to reduce teenage pregnancy and effectively coordinates the implementation of the plan.

66. The strategy for reducing teenage conception is underpinned by a sound action plan based on national recommended indicators for best practice. However, not all targets have specific measurable outcomes. This presents a challenge for the Board to demonstrate that they are effectively monitoring progress.

67. A wide range of initiatives are in place to reduce teenage conception. These are appropriately targeted at the identified vulnerable groups and those localities with the highest rates of teenage conception. These include sex and relationship education (SRE) training for all staff who work with children and young people and drop-in clinics run by the clinical outreach nurse in selected schools and youth centres. Easily accessible, confidential sexual health services, emergency hormonal contraception and free condoms are well promoted and widely available. Targeted access to sexual health services for 'hard to reach' groups of young people is facilitated via the mobile 'Urbie Project'. The clinical outreach nurse is easily accessible for one-to-one counselling, performs on-the-spot pregnancy tests and also prescribes and supplies emergency hormonal contraception to young people.

68. The council and its partners recognise the role of parents in contributing to reducing teenage conception and support them in this work. Parents of young people have access to a speakeasy course which helps them to discuss safe sex and relationships with their children. Counselling and guidance for pregnant teenagers is good. There are weekly drop-in clinics by the teenage pregnancy midwife who provides helpful advice, sexual and general health promotion to pregnant teenagers. Support for young parents is well established and developing further with secured resources from Sure Start to fund another four 'young mums' groups. Mothers under 16 have good access to parenting courses. Connexions have designated staff to coordinate help for young mothers in each locality. Each young mother receives one-to-one support and guidance from a Connexions personal adviser. The number of young mothers aged 16 in children's social care –19 in education, employment or training has increased from 29.2% in 2006 to 39.4% in 2007.

69. SRE training for professionals who work with young people is good; helpful guidance materials support professionals well in this work. Schools are encouraged by SRE officers to involve parents in developing their curriculum to include aspects of SRE relevant to the age group of the children. Consistency in SRE across schools in the local authority is promoted by the sharing of good nationally recognised SRE materials across all schools.

70. Children and young people have good access to contraceptive, sexual health, and drug and alcohol information, accessible in schools, libraries, youth centres and GPs surgeries. All youth workers are trained appropriately in SRE, and SRE training is mandatory for foster carers. Young people interviewed, including those from the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender group, highly rated the service offered by the clinical outreach nurse and youth workers at the drop-in clinic and in youth centres.

71. Children and young people's engagement has been at the centre of all the initiatives developed around delivering the teenage pregnancy strategy. For example, young people participated in the development of guidance information such as No Worries, C-Card and the drug misuse leaflet and their views have contributed to the development of the implementation plan. Surveys of children and young people over the last three years show they are now better informed about SRE.

## Service management



## Capacity to improve



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

Major strengths	Important weaknesses
<p>Strong leadership of many services for children and young people.</p> <p>Strategic planning is good. Plans are jointly owned by partners and supported by effective partnership working.</p> <p>Priorities and allocation of resources are informed by extensive and effective consultation.</p> <p>Plans are based on good needs analysis.</p> <p>Clear and generally challenging targets.</p> <p>Good financial management and good allocation of resources to priorities.</p>	<p>The effectiveness of performance management of aspects of children's social care is undermined by poor data quality for some performance indicators and a lack of systematic quality assurance</p> <p>Not all targets in operational plans have specific measurable outcomes.</p>

73. Ambition is good. The vision for children and young people is set out in a clear charter and addresses the Every Child Matters agenda well. Ambitions are challenging and clearly articulated in the CYPP and the council's Corporate Plan. There is a strong focus on educational attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 with challenging targets for improvement. The plan has explicit targets for improved outcomes for all, but particularly for vulnerable children and young people, together with clear timescales and responsibilities for action.

74. Councillors and senior council officers, together with members of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, champion children's issues across their agencies and demonstrate strong leadership. The Executive Councillor for Children and Young People's services provides effective leadership and is highly regarded by staff and partner agencies. Good strategic planning is helping to improve services, particularly the long-term planning for schools. A good example of this is the joint planning with Bristol City Council, of a new primary school as part of the Wall Court Farm housing development.

75. Prioritisation is good. The CYPP sets clear priorities and targets and these are supported, in most areas, by good service plans. However, there are some gaps, such as the partnership's strategy for commissioning, which is still in development. Resources are allocated effectively to priorities. For example, following consultation the council allocated £2.2 million over the next three years to improve access to transport and to address underperformance in GCSE results. Early intervention and support services for children, young people and their families or carers has improved through the good implementation of the Common Assessment Framework using strong locality working.

76. There is investment in a wide range of preventative services. This includes sharing resources with partners to address local issues such as reducing teenage pregnancy, serious road accidents and improving health. This is yielding positive results. Almost all schools (99%) are participating in the Healthy Schools programme with 82% of schools achieving the standard, well above the national targets and helping the council achieve Beacon status.

77. Capacity is good. Governance arrangements of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership are strong with good engagement from partners and a visible commitment across the partnership to multi-agency working; this constitutes the children's trust arrangements for the area. The council with its partners has established a clear locality-based approach to addressing the needs of children and young people. All 11 of the phase two Sure Start children's centres were opened on time, strengthening local delivery of services.

78. The council overall is using the capacity of the voluntary sector effectively. There are many examples of good engagement and the council is using commissioned services very effectively to meet priorities. However, there is insufficient support for building the capacity of smaller community-based voluntary organisations.

79. Services for children and young people provide good value for money. Services are low cost and overall demonstrate good or above average performance. The council has been willing to make hard decisions to achieve this, for example reconfiguring and developing education services to better meet current need and plan for future population changes. In addition, income generated by the council's Children and Young People's Directorate is above the unitary average. Staffing levels are good and staff are well supported through good training, development and supervision.

80. There are some examples of the flexible use of resources between partners, but these are limited and there are no pooled budgets. This has not affected the commitment of partners to initiatives and projects but may weaken the long-term sustainability of partnership arrangements. Overall collaborative working both within the partnership and with external partners is helping to ensure effective use of resources and is strengthening a joined-up approach to the provision of services for children and young people; for example, there is good use made of the national commissioning network to identify external residential placements for looked after children. Joint workforce planning is beginning to develop, informed by good examples of joint planning and working within localities. The partnership is working towards a strategic approach but this is not yet in place.

81. Financial management is good. Budgets are effectively monitored with end-of-year budget variations being less than 1% in each of the last three years. The partnership between council services and schools is strong with some £7 million per annum of council services being purchased by schools; this is significantly higher than the average for unitary authorities. School deficits are low, and while there is a track record of above average surpluses, mature relationships with schools are assisting in the management of these and action plans to address surpluses are being put in place. Resources overall across the partnership are in place to meet priorities and financial management by the key partners is good.

82. Councillors take their responsibilities as corporate parents seriously. Training for all councillors on corporate parenting is in place, is well attended and young people are involved in its delivery. This is improving their understanding of the needs and aspirations of young people. Councillors are also trained in equality and diversity.

83. Information technology systems are limiting service effectiveness within social care services and the project management of the implementation of the new integrated children's services system has been weak. These limitations have been identified and improved children's social care systems are being developed. However, currently the council cannot effectively demonstrate that its systems support good customer service and staff capacity is being wasted through the use of manual systems and checking.

84. Overall, performance management is adequate. The council has a good system for managing performance, which is used both by the council and the key partners in the CYPP to monitor performance against the priorities and associated targets in the CYPP. Within education services, data are robust and used systematically to improve performance. However, the effectiveness of performance management of aspects of children's social care is undermined by poor data quality for some performance indicators and a lack of systematic quality assurance. Not all targets in implementation plans across the partnership have specific measurable outcomes. The council's select committees provide good scrutiny of performance; task groups take forward individual issues and these influence policy and allocation of resources. There is effective management action to deal with underperformance, for example, in addressing areas of below average educational achievement and teenage pregnancies.

85. Capacity to improve is good. Outcomes for most children and young people are good. There is clear and sustained commitment to the joint agenda by partners, with strong and visible leadership. Most services and performance indicators have continued to improve from a generally high base. The council and its partners are aware of the gaps and barriers to further improvement and are effectively addressing them.

## Annex A

### **MOST RECENTLY PUBLISHED ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE**

#### **Summary**

South Gloucestershire Council consistently delivers services above minimum requirements for children and young people. Outcomes in each of the five main areas are good overall. Children's services are making a number of valuable contributions to improving the achievement and well-being of children and young people in the area. Leadership of children's services is strong and the council has made good steps in working more closely with its partners. There has been good improvement in nearly all of the areas for development identified by the last APA. The council knows itself well and sets ambitious targets for improvement. The clearly written Children and Young People's Plan and the reviews of its progress demonstrate a good capacity for further improvement.

The full APA can be found at:

[http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=3105&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa\\_2007\\_803.pdf](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/pdf/?inspectionNumber=3105&providerCategoryID=0&fileName=\\APA\\apa_2007_803.pdf)

## Annex B

### CORPORATE ASSESSMENT ACHIEVEMENT - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Outcomes for children and young people in South Gloucestershire are good. Children and young people are generally healthy and most report feeling safe in their local area. Vulnerable children are well supported, outcomes for looked after children are good. Those most at risk are identified and have sound plans to help to protect them. Educational outcomes are on the whole positive for most children and young people. However, standards at GCSE are below similar areas. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well. Opportunities for participation are extensive. The number of young people entering the youth justice system for the first time has reduced and the number who re-offend is significantly lower than similar areas. High numbers of young people, including care leavers and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are in education, employment or training.
2. Service management is good. There is a clear and ambitious vision for children and young people set within a charter. This is supported by the CYPP which has explicit targets for improving outcomes. Strong leadership underpinned by good strategic planning is helping to improve services and allocate resources effectively. Capacity is good, with strong engagement from partners and a visible commitment across the partnership to multi-agency working at all levels, evident in the good development of locality working.
3. Performance management is adequate. Education services use sound data well to improve performance but this is not systematically in place within children's social care, where there are weaknesses in data quality and quality assurance. The use of information technology systems to support the partnership, while improving, is underdeveloped. Not all targets in implementation plans across the partnership have specific measurable outcomes. The select committees provide good scrutiny of performance. Services are low cost and, overall, demonstrate good or above average performance. Financial management is good and budgets are effectively monitored. Overall, this represents good value for money.
4. The combined work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is good. Children and young people are well supported to maintain their good health. Almost all looked after children have an annual health check. There is satisfactory and improving provision of, and access to, CAMHS. Drug and alcohol services provide very effective support for young people with drug or substance abuse problems, including good preventative work in schools and colleges. Involvement of schools in the Healthy Schools initiative is excellent and has exceeded national targets. The strategy to reduce teenage pregnancy is good and beginning to have an impact.

5. Children and young people appear safe and arrangements to ensure this are adequate. The 2007 APA judged arrangements for staying safe as good. The joint area review found that strong inter-agency partnership working ensures that the most vulnerable children receive effective services and those in need of protection are identified and receive a prompt and appropriate response. However, weaknesses in the reliability of data, safe recruitment and quality assurance meant that the judgement on safeguarding is adequate. Looked after children and young people receive good care from well-trained and supported carers and practitioners.

6. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and to achieve well is good. Schools are effectively supported and challenged by the Learning and School Effectiveness Service. Inclusion is well supported and transition planning effective. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are significantly above the national average and higher than similar authorities. Standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are higher than the national average and in line with similar authorities.

7. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is good. A strong culture of participation ensures a good range of opportunities for children and young people, including those who are more vulnerable, to give their views and influence service delivery. However, coordination of activities and use of feedback are not sufficiently developed. Young people at risk of offending or re-offending are well supported but some are being placed inappropriately in bed and breakfast accommodation.

8. The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to achieve economic well-being is good. Effective partnership working on the well-established 14–19 strategy is increasing the range of vocational provision for young people. Care leavers are well supported and live in appropriate housing. The number of young mothers aged 16–19 in education, employment or training has increased significantly.

9. The capacity of council services to improve is good. There is clear and sustained commitment to the joint agenda by partners, with effective and visible leadership. Most services and performance indicators have continued to improve from a generally high base. The council and its partners are aware of the gaps and barriers to further improvement and are effectively addressing them.

## Annex C

### SUMMARY OF JOINT AREA REVIEW AND ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS

1. This joint area review was conducted using the arrangements required under section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of inspectors from Ofsted, the Healthcare Commission and the Audit Commission. The review was undertaken according to the requirements of the *Framework for the inspection of children's services*.

2. The review was linked to the contemporaneous corporate assessment of the local council by the Audit Commission and these findings plus aspects of the most recent annual performance assessment are represented in the relevant part of the corporate assessment report.

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

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