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Every child matters

Joint area reviews of children's services

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HMICA
HM Inspectorate of Court Administration

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Introduction

1. This paper sets out the arrangements to carry out joint area reviews of services for children and young people in a children's services authority area.¹
2. The Children Act 2004 requires joint area reviews to be conducted at the request of the Secretary of State for Education and Skills in accordance with arrangements made by the Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. A review must be conducted by two or more of the designated inspectorates or commissions. The Secretary of State has requested that joint area reviews begin in September 2005 and cover each children's services authority area by the end of 2008.
3. The *Framework for the inspection of children's services* defines principles to be applied in all relevant inspections of services for children and young people.² It sets out how they will report on contributions to improving the five outcomes for children and young people in terms of their: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; achieving economic well-being. The findings of inspections will be used in joint area reviews.
4. Joint area reviews will also draw on annual performance assessments of council children's services, the arrangements for which are set out in a separate paper.³ Joint area reviews and annual performance assessments will make use of the same range of key judgements, data and documentation. Annual performance assessment of council children's services will provide the basis for decisions on whether new fieldwork is required in joint area reviews. The findings of the joint area review will be followed up through the annual performance assessment.
5. Key judgements and evidence to be used in joint area reviews and annual performance assessments are set out separately.⁴ The key judgements reflect the aims for improved outcomes, set out in the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) *Every Child Matters: Change for Children* programme (December 2004). They

¹ The scope of joint area reviews is defined by section 23 of the Children Act 2004 and regulations to be made under it. Subject to consultation, regulations will provide that, in general, the scope includes services for children and young people aged 0-19 inclusive, whether by statutory, voluntary or private providers, which are assessed by any of the nine inspectorates and commissions listed in section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It also includes services for those over 19 who are receiving services as care leavers under sections 23C to 24D of the Children Act 1989, and those over 19 but under 25 with a learning difficulty within the meaning of section 13 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and receiving services under that Act. However, for certain services – in secure training centres, prisons and removal centres, by youth offending teams, local probation boards and police forces – only services for children up to their 18th birthday are within the scope of joint area reviews. New functions introduced by the Children Act 2004, on cooperation to improve well-being, information databases, local safeguarding children boards, children and young people's plans, and director of and lead member of children's services, are also within the scope.

² *Every child matters: Framework for the inspection of children's services* (available on www.ofsted.gov.uk).

³ *Every child matters: Annual performance assessment of council children's services* (available on www.ofsted.gov.uk). This performance assessment will link to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) of each single-tier and county council, providing the CPA score for children and young people and contributing to the CPA corporate assessment of each council. In the year in which a joint area review takes place, annual performance assessment will be based mainly on the relevant findings of the review.

⁴ *Every child matters: Inspection of children's services: key judgements and illustrative evidence* (available on www.ofsted.gov.uk).

also reflect the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services 'the Children's National Service Framework', (September 2004).

6. Joint area reviews will normally be conducted at the same time as the CPA corporate assessment. The structure of both processes and the arrangements for gathering evidence and reporting the findings are compatible so that duplication between the two processes is reduced and, where appropriate, evidence, findings and judgements can be exchanged.

Joint area reviews: summary of key features

- A joint area review will be conducted in each children's services authority area in the three years from September 2005.
- Reviews will be conducted by multi-disciplinary teams using a common approach based on the *Framework for the Inspection of Children's Services*.
- Reviews will take the place of separate inspections of council education and children's social care services and will cover other services provided in the local area. Evidence from other inspections, such as schools and residential settings, will contribute to the coverage.
- Normally, reviews will take place at the same time as corporate assessments of councils for the CPA, with documentation, judgements and methodology aligned to make the processes complementary.
- In those local areas where the inspection of the youth offending team has not previously taken place, this inspection will be aligned with the review so that evidence and findings can be shared.
- Reviews will take account of the views of children and young people, and of their parents and carers, and seek to involve them in other ways.
- Coverage will be organised around 36 key judgements and four judgement areas in service management, many of which can be made from performance data, existing inspection evidence, self-assessments and documentation and will call for no new inspection enquiry.
- Any new fieldwork will be proportionate to risk and will focus on no more than 10 of the most significant key judgements for the local area and four judgement areas in service management which will always be covered, with some fieldwork always being conducted on safeguarding children and young people. Fieldwork will include tracking the experiences of individual children, young people, parents and carers, and neighbourhood studies.
- Analysis and fieldwork will be completed within six working weeks.
- Each joint area review will lead to a single published report.

Purpose of joint area reviews

7. Joint area reviews will set out to describe the outcomes achieved by children and young people growing up in the area, and evaluate the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being.

8. Joint area reviews will focus on the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and achieve economic well-being. Where relevant and available, comparisons will be made with the overall national picture or with similar areas. The reviews will then seek to evaluate the collective contribution made to outcomes for children and young people by relevant services in the area. They will judge the contributions made by the council's services overall and make specific judgements about the quality, management and leadership of the council's principal education and children's social care services, and of other services where there is sufficient evidence. Annex A defines the basis on which outcomes will be measured and contributions to outcomes evaluated.

9. Joint area reviews will report on the well-being of all children and young people in a local area. They will cover universal, preventive and targeted services. Particular attention will be 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 will be covered in detail in every review: children and young people who are looked after by the council; and, children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.⁵ In the case of children and young people placed in residential establishments, this will include the duty of care that is the responsibility of the placing council, even when children and young people are placed outside the council area.⁶ Depending on local circumstances, outcomes for other vulnerable groups may also be closely analysed and service contributions to them evaluated.

Scope of joint area reviews

Key judgements

10. The maximum scope of reviews is defined by 36 key judgements on service contributions to outcomes for children and young people and four judgement areas in service management (see Annex A). *Every child matters: Inspection of children's services: key judgements and evidence* gives the associated performance data and potential illustrations of evidence.

11. Coverage of the key judgements will be differentiated and proportionate. It is not the intention that all of them will be covered in the same way in each review. Some judgements will be made on the basis of evidence from existing inspections and annual performance assessments and will call for no further enquiry. Others will

⁵ The term learning difficulties and/or disabilities is used to refer to individuals or groups of learners who have either a learning difficulty in relation to acquiring new skills or who learn at a different rate to their peers. The term is used to cross the professional boundaries between education, health and social services and to incorporate a common language from 0–19. The Disability Discrimination Act defines that, 'a person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.' Physical or mental impairments can include sensory impairments and learning difficulties. The definition also covers medical conditions when they have long-term and substantial effects on pupils' everyday lives.

Those designated with special educational needs (SEN) under current legislation (education) all have learning difficulties and/or disabilities that make it harder for them to learn than most learners of the same age.

⁶ For details of the assessment of the contribution of settings, see *Every child matters: Inspection of children's services: key judgements and illustrative evidence*.

be made on the basis of analysis of performance data, self-assessment and documents. From time to time, because of insufficient evidence, it may not be possible to report on all the key judgements.

12. Enquiries on a maximum of 10 key judgements will form the focus of the fieldwork; this maximum number should allow for coverage of service contributions across the five outcomes. The annual performance assessment, together with the annual assessment of healthcare bodies and the police baseline assessment, will play a major role in determining the key judgements which will require fieldwork in the joint area review. The guiding principles will be to identify and focus on those issues particularly affecting outcomes for children and young people, to reduce fieldwork to the minimum and to tailor fieldwork to the range and depth of likely issues in the local area. Service contributions to staying safe will always be inspected through some fieldwork in each review, in view of the high risks which are involved.

Service management

13. The basis for judgements about service management in joint area reviews will be the same as that in CPA corporate assessment, covering ambition, prioritisation, capacity and performance management. These will include judgements about value for money. Evaluation will focus on the way in which services work together to meet the requirements of the Children Act 2004 and how the views and needs of service users, including children and young people are taken into account in determining service provision.

14. Findings from studies of service contributions will be integrated with the findings of CPA corporate assessment on strategic management to form judgements of the management and capacity of the council's principal education and social care services. Where there is sufficient evidence, judgements will also be made of the management of services by organisations other than the council.

The involvement of partners⁷

15. Partners provide services which contribute to improving outcomes of children and young people. These services will be covered in the review, usually through the neighbourhood study or case tracking, but also when they make a contribution to a key judgement selected for fieldwork. The joint area review will also pay particular attention to the effectiveness of the arrangements made by the director of children's services in line with the requirements of the Children Act 2004, to cooperate with partners and the extent to which cooperation contributes to improving outcomes for children and young people.

16. Partners should be fully involved in the arrangements for the joint area review, through contributing evidence to the joint area review, including the local

⁷ Relevant partners are those listed in section 10 of the Children Act 2004, and any person or body with which the authority makes arrangements under section 10(1)(c) of the Act. Listed partners are local district councils, police authorities and chief officers of police, probation boards, youth offending teams, strategic health authorities and primary care trusts, and those providing services under section 114 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000; and the Learning and Skills Council for England.

self-assessment especially, responding to the inspection report and subsequently devising the written statement of proposed action.

Services provided by the voluntary and community sector

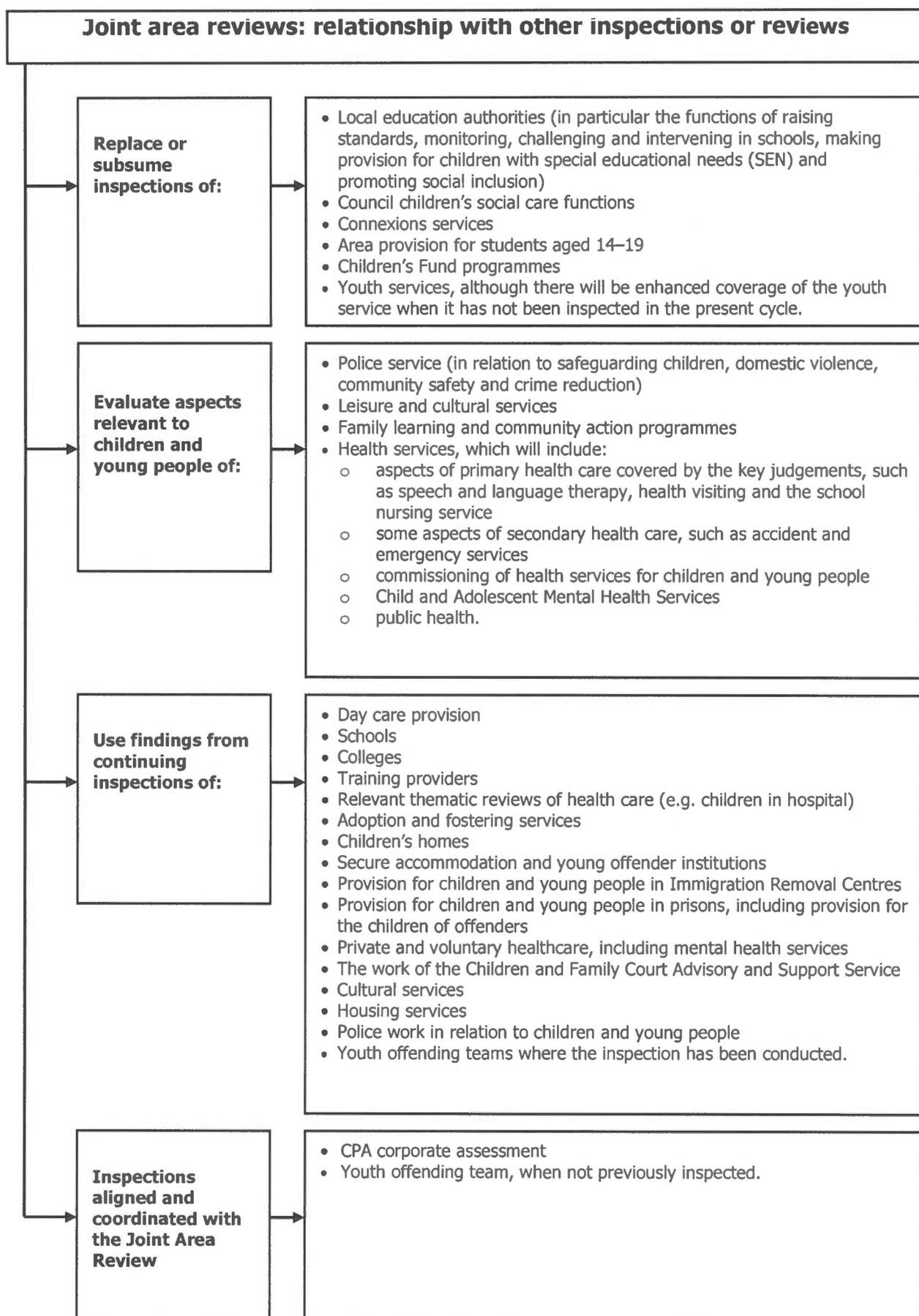
17. Joint area reviews will report on the contribution of services provided by the voluntary and community sector. Judgements will be made on the extent to which voluntary and community organisations are engaged with other partners in decisions about the strategic development of provision, and how far appropriate action has been taken to build on the capacity of voluntary and community sector providers to provide high-quality services that offer value for money. Judgements will include the contribution of voluntary and community services identified through case tracking and neighbourhood studies.

Early years providers, schools and colleges

18. Joint area reviews will make judgements on the contribution of early years providers, schools and colleges to improving outcomes for children and young people. It is not the intention to add an additional layer of inspection and these judgements will be made on the basis of the existing evidence from early years, school and college inspection. During the review, a small number of representatives from early years providers, schools and college staff may be asked to meet inspectors to contribute their views on local services. In addition, a small number of short visits may be made, especially for the case tracking and neighbourhood study, when the school or college makes a significant contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people.

Relationship with other inspections

19. This table sets the relationship of joint area reviews with current and continuing inspection. It shows the existing inspections that will be replaced or subsumed by the joint area reviews and those continuing inspections from which findings will be drawn.



Coordinating separate inspections

20. Where separate inspections take place, these will be arranged as far as possible so that they link with the joint area review. For example, efforts will be made to coordinate, wherever possible, the continuing programme of regulatory inspections of adoption and fostering services with the timings of joint area reviews.

Youth offending team inspections

21. Separate inspections will continue of youth offending teams, conducted by multi-disciplinary inspection teams led by HMI Probation. When these inspections have not already been conducted and when possible, they will be aligned with the joint area review and take place at the same time. Any shared areas for inspection will only be inspected once. Documents will be shared, relevant evidence and emerging findings exchanged and, where appropriate, some joint meetings and interviews will be conducted. Separate reports will continue to be published but the recommendations will be harmonised to ensure a compatible agenda for improvement.

Youth services inspections

22. Youth inspections allow Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools to 'inform the Secretary of State of the national picture of the quality of youth services and advise on the effectiveness of the local authority in fulfilling its duty to provide a youth service'. Ofsted's new framework for youth service inspections was launched in January 2004. Where a service has not been inspected under the new youth service framework, an enhanced coverage of youth service provision will be included within the joint area review. The enhanced coverage will mirror, as far as possible, the principles agreed for the joint area review so that:

- the joint area review is the primary inspection regime
- fieldwork is proportionate and differentiated
- as far as possible, use is made of youth service data
- the joint area review key judgements will inform youth service inspection fieldwork
- all stages and timings match those of the joint area review and arrangements are made under the management of the lead inspector for the joint area review.

23. A separate report on the youth service will be published at the same time as the report of the joint area review. This report will judge the youth services contribution to the five key outcomes and the extent to which the local authority provides a high quality youth service that meets the needs of young people effectively and efficiently.

The link with corporate assessment for the CPA

24. **Corporate assessment** measures the council's ability to engage with and lead their communities, deliver community priorities in partnership with others, and ensure continuous improvement across the range of council activities. Corporate assessment will report as one of its five achievement themes the contribution of the

council and its partners to the quality of outcomes for children and young people. Other themes will cover healthier communities, safer and stronger communities, outcomes for older people and sustainable communities, and transport. The content for the overall children and young people theme will be provided by the joint area review. In addition, it will provide examples of outcomes and activity that can be reported within other themes.

25. The **joint area review** covers all services for children and young people directly managed and/or commissioned by the council, as well as health and youth justice services provided by other bodies. It focuses on the contributions made by services to improving outcomes. Reports of joint area reviews will cover the leadership and management of services for children and, in particular, the way in which such services work together to improve outcomes. The corporate assessment will provide the strategic findings about the council for this section so that the joint area review team will not need to make additional enquiries beyond those pursued through investigating the contribution of services to improving outcomes.

26. The intention is normally to run the processes together. Responsibility for the integrity of the individual processes and for their integration will rest with the respective lead inspectors, who will finalise detailed arrangements with the council. This arrangement has the following three benefits:

- rationalisation for the council in preparing for inspection, providing documentation and involvement in interviews
- the ability to share expertise, perspectives and evidence across inspection teams
- the opportunity to present findings on a wide range of the council's work in a coherent form so that the agenda for improvement is clear and well-ordered.

27. Where the processes are not run together, arrangements will be made to ensure that the corporate assessment can make some up-to-date judgements on shared priorities for children and young people. These can derive from the most recent annual performance assessment of council children's services, together with other current evidence. If necessary, a children's services inspector will be deployed to the corporate assessment team. Conversely, the joint area review will make appropriate use of the most recent corporate assessment report and will collect evidence about the effectiveness of service management from enquiries about contributions of the different services.

Composition of the review team

28. All inspectorates and commissions will contribute to the compilation of information for reviews from existing inspection findings and performance data. These contributions are listed in the table overleaf:

a) Evidence provided by inspectorates

Description	Inspectorate/Commission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The annual performance assessment of council children’s services 	Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children and early years education – commentary on inspection findings 	Ofsted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools causing concern – monitoring information and some commentary 	Ofsted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other schools – commentary on recent inspection findings 	Ofsted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colleges – commentary on inspection findings 	Ofsted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training providers – commentary on inspection findings 	Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14–19 strategy – commentary 	Ofsted and ALI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health bodies (star ratings) (2005) 	Commission for Healthcare Improvement (Healthcare Commission) via inspection support unit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthcare assessment (2006) 	Healthcare Commission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social care – monitoring information and commentary 	CSCI Business Relationship Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children’s Homes 	CSCI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adoption and fostering 	CSCI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure units 	CSCI
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police baseline assessment 	HMI (Constabulary)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspection of Young Offender Institutions and Immigration Removal Centres 	HMI (Prisons)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth service inspection findings – in areas that have received an inspection 	Ofsted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline assessments: summary of previous inspections of: LEA, 14–19 area, and Connexions partnership 	Ofsted
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of the findings of the schools’ perception survey 	Audit Commission

b) Evidence provided by other bodies

Description	Government bodies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education services 	DfES Children’s Services Improvement Adviser (Education)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth offending team – contextual report 	Youth Justice Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health bodies – commentary 	Strategic Health Authority

29. Review teams will be multi-disciplinary and will always include inspectors from at least two bodies. Teams will have between four and eight members, with the number depending on the extent of fieldwork and whether an enhancement covers the youth service. Fieldwork review teams will normally include inspectors from Ofsted, CSCI, the Healthcare Commission and, where appropriate, HMI Constabulary and ALI. An Audit Commission inspector will be a member of both the joint area review and corporate assessment teams.

30. The Audit Commission inspector, who is a member of both teams will contribute to ensuring coordination between the enquiries and the findings of the teams. In joint area reviews, this joint inspector will be assigned responsibility by the lead inspector for:

- ensuring coherence and consistency by bringing together the findings on key management processes from enquiries in joint area reviews with the findings of corporate assessment, as they apply to services and partnership working for children
- providing commentary on the value for money of services for children, drawing on evidence from and judgements by other team members
- any coverage and reporting of contributions to outcomes for children made by services that the Audit Commission assesses.

31. Inspectors from different inspectorates and commissions will have knowledge of the range of services which are being inspected and will contribute to the collection of evidence on all services. All inspectors who take part in the joint area reviews will have undertaken a two stage multi-disciplinary training programme which prepares them for the use of a common inspection methodology and for working and making judgements in a multi-disciplinary team. In addition to this, inspectors will have attended further training on their role as lead inspectors.

32. Leaders of review teams will normally be inspectors from CSCI and Ofsted, although they may also be drawn from other contributing inspectorates. The lead inspector of the joint area review will allocate tasks within the team, working within the overall arrangements set by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, and will be responsible for the conduct and reporting of the review. Allocation of tasks will be decided in the light of the issues chosen for detailed enquiry and will respect the specialisms of members of the review team. Judgements of the performance and management of particular services will be made by the responsible specialist inspectorate or commission. All judgements will take account of the evidence gathered by the team and be agreed corporately with them.

33. Over time, plans will be implemented to involve young people in reviews, working alongside inspectors. They will have specific tasks identified, particularly in relation to gathering the views of children and young people and in reporting back to them. As these arrangements are implemented, local services will be fully briefed about the role which the young person will play in the team.

Programme and notification

Programme

34. The Secretary of State has requested that the programme of reviews will commence in September 2005. The full indicative programme of joint area reviews and corporate assessments has been announced in a form which gives the precise dates of reviews taking place between September 2005 and March 2006, and indicates the period of the year for others. The programme after March 2006 may be subject to revision on the basis of the most up-to-date performance and assessment information. It will be re-announced in December 2005, giving precise dates for reviews taking place between April 2006 and March 2007. In December 2006, the remaining programme will be revised and re-announced, giving dates for the remaining reviews taking place between April 2007 and December 2008. Programmes will be published on the websites of commissions and inspectorates.

35. The indicative programme of reviews and corporate assessment has been drawn up to take account of:

- the overall CPA rating for the council, and its CPA scores for education and social care in 2003
- corporate assessment priorities
- the dates of the last inspections of local authority education (LEA) and children's social care services
- the latest CSCI performance assessment judgement on children's social care services
- the latest Ofsted inspection judgement on the effectiveness of the LEA and 14–19 education
- the best match with priority for inspection of youth offending teams, as advised by HMI Probation
- information from the Healthcare Commission, HMI Constabulary and other inspectorates.

36. The programme may be revised for subsequent years, to take account of:

- the outcomes of the annual performance assessment of council children's services
- the need, where there is formal government intervention, to undertake the review at an appropriate time, normally in the last year of intervention
- other information about local services for children and young people available to the commissions and inspectorates.

Notification

37. From September 2005, notification of the precise date of a joint area review, normally together with the corporate assessment, will be made in the December before the financial year in which the review is scheduled. Notification will be made to the children's services authority, through the council's director of children's services (or equivalent senior officer), who will be asked to coordinate the

contributions of different services to the review. This will include coordinating the self-assessment, providing key documents, making arrangements for the review team's programme of meetings and visits, and providing written comments on the draft report and making arrangements for the feedback.

Conduct of joint area reviews

38. Shown overleaf is an outline of the stages of a review, which will be coordinated with the stages of corporate assessment where the processes are running simultaneously. A summary table detailing how these processes are coordinated is provided in Annex B.

Briefing conference	A conference for local areas will be held jointly with the Audit Commission. Arrangements for joint area reviews and CPA corporate assessment will be discussed and questions answered.
Consultation	Consultation with children and young people using the web-based 'Tellus' survey will take place following these meetings.
Setting up	<p>A meeting will be held between the lead inspector and the director of children's services (or equivalent) and a briefing will be given to other officers and to members of the council including the designated lead member and the councils' partners about the scope and organisation of the review.⁸ Where possible, this meeting will normally be held with the lead inspector of the corporate assessment.</p> <p>These meetings will confirm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the basis for planning the review programme • the selection of key judgements on which fieldwork will be carried out • the arrangements for case tracking and neighbourhood studies • the timetable for the review and its reporting.
Analysis	<p>This stage will involve the whole review team and will take up to a week. The purpose is to analyse the available evidence, decide the judgements on aspects which are not subject to fieldwork and form hypotheses which will be tested during the fieldwork.</p> <p>At the end of the analysis, the review team will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identified hypotheses to follow up in the fieldwork • established detailed plans for the fieldwork which will be coordinated with the requirements for CPA corporate assessment.
Fieldwork	Fieldwork will normally take place over a two-week period. The focus will be on gathering evidence directly from children and young people, their parents and carers, front-line workers, service

⁸ Partners here refers to representatives of those listed in the Children Act 2004 (Section 10) but, where relevant could also include representatives from voluntary and community services, colleges, schools and early years providers.

managers and elected members and partners. At the end of this stage, inspectors will have gathered the evidence on which to base their findings.

Reporting

When the review team is on site, the lead inspector will discuss the emerging issues with the director of children's services (or equivalent) and other senior officers, and elected members, including the designated lead member, as appropriate. At the end of the fieldwork, the team leader will provide headline feedback and will contribute to judgements on the council's services for children and young people to the feedback on CPA corporate assessment.

Within four weeks, a draft report will be sent to the director of children's services (or equivalent) at the same time as the draft report of CPA corporate assessment. The director of children's services will be asked to coordinate written comments on accuracy within two weeks. After this, members of the team will meet senior officers, the designated lead member and other members of the local strategic partnership to discuss the findings. Meetings to discuss the findings of corporate assessment will be held on the same day. The report will be issued about four weeks later, together with a copy of a child-friendly report, normally at the same time as the report on corporate assessment.

Briefing conference

39. This conference will be organised jointly by the Audit Commission and the children's services inspectorates and take place about four to six months before the inspections commence. It will aim to provide representatives from local services with the information and tools necessary to enable them to prepare for the joint area review and the corporate assessment. The alignment with corporate assessment, the timeline and the requirements, including the self-assessment, will be discussed in detail.

Surveying the views of children and young people

40. Children's and young people's views and experiences of services will be gathered at an early stage. Some 600 children and young people will be asked to participate in a web-based survey known as the 'Tellus' questionnaire. They will be selected in consultation with the director of children's services (or equivalent) on the basis of age, and on the location of their school or college. Those involved will not be asked to give their names and confidentiality will be maintained. Children and young people will be asked to complete the questionnaire and their responses will be collated and presented in a report for use by the review team during the analysis. The survey is not attempting to secure a reliable sample of views; instead, it will be an aid to identifying issues that need testing at the next stage of the review.

Completing the self-assessment

41. The director of children's services (or equivalent) will be asked to coordinate the completion of a self-assessment with key partners covering relevant local services. From 2006, the self-assessment is compatible with the requirements of the Children and Young Person's Plan and its review so should not be an additional requirement.

42. The template and guidance on its completion are published separately.⁹ The same template will be used for both the annual performance assessment and joint area reviews. Year on year, the assessment can be updated or refreshed rather than rewritten. The council will be asked to submit its completed self-assessment in late May annually for the purposes of annual performance assessment. When a joint area review is scheduled in close proximity to this, the same self-assessment will be used. An opportunity to update it will be offered.

43. The key judgements used for joint area reviews and annual performance assessment help to illuminate the potential scope of the self-assessment. It is not intended that the self-assessment should cover every key judgement. It should focus, by agreement, on those key judgements which are of particular significance to the local area either because they are local priorities or because performance data and inspection evidence show relative weaknesses.

44. The self-assessment will allow the services in the local area to make their own analysis of key indicators, and of the views of service users, in particular children and young people. It will allow them to assess activities to demonstrate the effectiveness with which they have worked together, how far priorities have been implemented and to evaluate the extent to which the actions taken have improved outcomes for children and young people.

45. The self-assessment provides an opportunity for services to demonstrate that they have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses in current outcomes for children and young people in the local area and, on this basis, to demonstrate how well-founded priorities have been set for improvement. It includes an evaluation of whether the action taken has resulted in improvements in outcomes. It also includes how far management arrangements, the use of resources and working in partnership has inhibited or stimulated improvement. Evidence will also be required on the way in which children and young people have been consulted and the extent to which their views has influenced developments.

46. Members of the review team will use self-assessment to:

- gain information on services and provision and on local priorities for improvement
- deploy inspection resources and selecting areas for additional fieldwork
- follow up issues in fieldwork
- confirm judgements in areas where no fieldwork is taking place

⁹ The template and guidance are available on www.ofsted.gov.uk and www.csci.org.uk

- provide evidence of the quality of management and capacity to improve.

47. The approach to self-assessment will also be compatible with the self-assessment for corporate assessment, and opportunities will be provided for self-assessments to be cross-referenced. Self-assessment for corporate assessment will cover the council's performance across all shared priority areas. Self-assessment compiled for the joint area review will focus on services for children and young people, with contributions made by the major partners in the local area. Self-assessments and judgements of their quality will be shared between the teams.

Setting up

48. The lead inspector will brief the director of children's services (or equivalent), leading councillors and partners about the scope, organisation and the indicative timetable and programme for the review. Where possible, this meeting will be held jointly with the lead inspector of the corporate assessment to ensure that the on-site programme is coordinated.

49. At this stage, using the findings of the annual performance assessment, the aspects that do not require any fieldwork will be decided, and the issues that will be investigated by fieldwork determined. Information will be requested for a selection of individual cases for in-depth analysis and the neighbourhoods will be identified for detailed study.

Analysis

50. This stage will take up to a week. The review team will analyse the full range of existing inspection findings, read a selection of local plans, evaluate the area's self-assessment and make the judgements, as far as possible, on aspects which do not require fieldwork. Inspectors will also draw on performance assessments and evidence from institutional and regulatory inspections. They will read case records of children and young people selected for detailed case tracking. Use may also be made of surveys of members of the local strategic partnership and, where available, surveys of schools, service staff and residents (including parents, carers and children and young people) in order to determine, more precisely, the focus of the enquiries. If the material identifies good practice, then the review report will draw attention to it.

51. A detailed inspection fieldwork plan, which is compatible with the requirements of corporate assessment, will be finalised at the end of this stage.

Fieldwork

52. Fieldwork will normally take up to two weeks and include enquiries on no more than 10 key judgements selected because they are of particular local significance and four judgement areas in service management. Joint area review and corporate assessment teams will ensure that the on-site programme is coordinated. Fieldwork will include case tracking and at least one neighbourhood study, together with meetings with service managers and front-line staff and a small number of visits to services or settings. During fieldwork, inspectors will conduct discussions

with children and young people as well as parents and carers, often in order to ascertain their views on a range of local issues.

Case tracking

53. The purpose of case tracking is to assess the nature and effectiveness of agencies' involvement with children and young people and the contribution which they make to improving outcomes through a detailed examination of a small sample of carefully selected children and young people who are supported by more than one service. The local authority will be asked to provide details of 100 children who are known to one or more local service. The lead inspector, in discussion with members of the team, will select 10 cases for in-depth scrutiny. Case tracking will involve: the reading of relevant case files; the analysis of questionnaires completed by key workers; discussions with the children and young people, if possible; interviews with parents and carers, key staff and managers.

Neighbourhood studies

54. Neighbourhood studies will enable inspectors to gather first-hand evidence of the views and experiences of children and young people, how local services contribute to improving outcomes for children and young people, and how local services work together. A neighbourhood study might involve, for example, an area such as a housing estate, where:

- the percentage of children and young people is in line with the average for the area
- indicators of economic, social, cultural and health disadvantage are above average for the area
- initiatives are underway to improve outcomes for children and young people
- there are examples of coordinated working between agencies such as SureStart, health and child care providers.

55. The local area will be asked to provide a small number of examples of neighbourhoods which would illustrate service provision and practice. The review team and the council and its partners will agree on at least one neighbourhood for further fieldwork. The neighbourhood(s) will be selected so that the key judgements identified for fieldwork can be pursued. The review team will engage in a range of activities in that area including:

- listening to the views of children and young people, parents and carers
- discussions with front-line staff, including teachers, social workers, community workers, youth workers, police and health professionals
- visits to schools, youth and community centres, health centres and co-located services, such as children's centres or SureStart local programmes.

Meetings

56. The fieldwork stage will also normally include meetings with lead council members and members of bodies such as the police authority or primary care trusts, community representatives, schools, voluntary organisations, service users and senior managers, as well as group discussions with front-line staff. The range of this

work will depend on the analysis of the key judgements to be investigated and the findings of the neighbourhood studies and case tracking. It may involve visits to some settings. For instance, a visit will always be made to a children's social services duty team, or equivalent, to assess the quality of the referral, initial assessment and decision making processes as part of fieldwork in relation to 'staying safe'.

57. Meetings will be compatible with requirements of corporate assessment so that any duplication between the review and assessment is avoided. Wherever possible, individuals will be interviewed only once. Corporate assessment will cover the political leadership and strategic management of the council. The director of children's services, lead council member for children's services and members of the children and young people's strategic partnership, or their equivalents, may be interviewed jointly or by both teams. Managers and staff of services for children will be interviewed by the joint area review team.

58. Protocols will ensure a consistent approach to recording evidence, making judgements and sharing findings. Analysis of evidence will be shared between teams. Lead inspectors will attend one another's meetings and seek to resolve any conflicts of judgement.

Consultation with children and young people

59. Consideration of children's and young people's views and experiences will be at the heart of joint area reviews. All sources of evidence, including the views of children and young people, will be used to inform key judgements. Their views will be gathered at every stage of the review, using a range of methods including:

- a confidential web-based survey of 600 children and young people aged 10–15 conducted by using the 'Tellus' questionnaire which is administered by schools and will be used in the analysis stage to inform of the emerging findings
- case-tracking, using a paper-based survey of 100 families with children from vulnerable groups followed by an in-depth case study of 10 of these families with face-to-face interviews
- the neighbourhood study, in which the views of children and young people of all ages and abilities will be collected through a range of focus groups and visits to settings
- the results of surveys and consultations with children and young people which are conducted by the local area
- findings of consultation with children and young people which have taken place during the inspection of settings such as special schools, healthcare provision and children's homes.

Making graded judgements

60. Twelve judgements will be graded using the following four-point scale agreed by the Local Services Inspectorate Forum:

Grade	Descriptor
Grade 4: A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for users	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for children and young people, is innovative and cost-effective and fully contributes to raising expectations and the achievement of wider outcomes for the community
Grade 3: A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for users	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for children and young people, has some innovative practice and is increasingly cost-effective whilst making contributions to wider outcomes for the community
Grade 2: A service that delivers only minimum requirements for users	A service that delivers only minimum requirements for children and young people, but is not demonstrably cost-effective nor contributes significantly to wider outcomes for the community
Grade 1: A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for users	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for children and young people, is not cost-effective and makes little or no contribution to wider outcomes for the community

61. The review team will reach its graded judgements by collective consideration of the evidence, in which specialist contributions will have particular weight but will be balanced within an overall view of the needs and priorities of the area.

62. First, graded judgements will be made on **the collective contribution of all services to each outcome**. The team will make the key judgements in relation to the extent to which the actions taken are improving outcomes. The significance of the collective contribution of local services to each outcome will be assessed, with account taken of the different governance of individual services.

63. Second, **the contribution of council services** will be assessed overall and also separately for the council's education and social care services. A separate judgement will also be made on how far the **local health service** contributes to outcomes for children and young people.

64. Third, judgements will be made on the collective contribution of all services to **service management**. Evidence and findings from the studies of local service contributions to outcomes for children and young people will be integrated with the findings of the corporate assessment. These judgements will have different dimensions. The review team will:

- use consultation evidence gathered by agencies from children and young people, as well as investigate how effectively services consult and use the views of users particularly children and young people to improve provision
- give priority to providing judgements of how well local services work together to deliver good outcomes for children and young people, in line with the requirement in the Children Act 2004 for services to cooperate. Key judgements identify the features that will be taken into account in making this judgement. No prior assumptions will be made about any particular form of local organisation; rather, the review team will focus on the effectiveness of local organisation, whatever form it takes
- evaluate current performance in achieving value for money and the extent to which services seek to secure and improve value for money. The process of establishing value for money will involve consideration of costs, along with other features such as local context, equity (access and diversity) and quality of service. It will consider whether value for money is improving and efficiency gains are being made. It will consider how value for money is managed and look at the use of partnerships, procurement, pooled budgets and commissioning. Judgements will address current performance and how far it has improved over time. Judgements will rely primarily on evidence of the effectiveness of outcomes achieved and the delivery and improvement in value for money.

65. Fourth, graded judgements will be made on the **capacity to improve**, which will involve a judgement of the capacity to improve all services collectively, as well as a judgement of the capacity to improve of the council's services within the whole. Judgements about the service capacity to improve will take account of their contribution to improving outcomes for children and young people, as well as their track record in service management.

Reporting the findings

66. Corporate assessment and joint area review teams will coordinate their feedback and reporting arrangements to ensure clarity and consistency. Throughout the fieldwork stage, the team leader will discuss emerging issues with the director of children's services (or equivalent) and other senior managers as appropriate. At the end of the fieldwork, the team leader will provide an oral summary of the main emergent findings to the director of children's services and the designated lead member.

67. Within four weeks, and at the same time as the draft corporate assessment report is sent to the chief executive, a draft report will be sent to the director of children's services (or equivalent) who, in a two-week period, will be asked to coordinate written comments on its accuracy.

68. After this, the corporate assessment team, with the lead inspector of the joint area review team, will provide feedback to members and senior officers of the

council. The joint area review team, with the lead inspector of the corporate assessment, will feed back to the director of children's services, the lead member for children's services, representatives of partner organisations and the local children and young people strategic partnership. Both reports will be issued simultaneously about four weeks later.

69. The joint area review report will have the sections set out on page 23 and each section will include recommendations. Recommendations will take account of local governance arrangements when referring to accountability for improvement. The report will be written so that it communicates the findings to service users, including parents and carers, as well as service providers.

Context

An account of key features of the local context and the organisation and funding of service provision.

Outcomes

An account of key outcomes for children and young people in the area, focusing on staying safe, enjoying and achieving, being healthy, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being with reference to outcomes nationally and for similar areas. This will be based, in part, on a published set of performance indicators. The accuracy of the data will be checked with the providers in the local area before being used for review purposes. In some cases, the outcomes for an aspect relate to public service agreement targets, such as educational attainment data. Some outcomes, such as those under 'enjoying and achieving', have an abundance of indicators. In other cases, there are fewer definitive indicators and the conclusions that can be drawn from those that exist will need to be cautious.

Summary

A summary of main findings on key contributions to outcomes for children and young people, the effectiveness and efficiency of services, and what needs to be done to improve services.

Service contribution to outcomes

An evaluation of how well universal, preventative and specialist services work together to improve outcomes for children and young people. Particular attention will be given to action on behalf of those who are disadvantaged and/or vulnerable, and the report will evaluate this action specifically. Although variation in accountability for local services will be taken into account, this will be in the context of the council's community leadership role.

Service Management

An evaluation of how services work together in relation to ambition, prioritisation, capacity and performance management, including a review of value for money issues.

70. Children and young people will receive information from the joint area review in three ways. First, those who take part in the web survey will receive, through their schools, a summary version of the aggregated collection of views from the analysis stage. Second, inspectors who hold discussions with individual children and young people at the fieldwork stage will respond to questions and give feedback about that particular session. Third, a summary report for children and young people will be produced and will be forwarded for distribution through the director of children's services.

Action after the review

71. The Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2005 will set out action to be taken by the children's services authority on receiving a report. The

following paragraphs summarise expected requirements, drawn from draft regulations on which the DfES is consulting from March to June 2005.

72. Ofsted will send the report to the children's services authority and to the Secretary of State. The report will be placed on Ofsted's and other relevant inspectorates' and commissions' websites. It is the responsibility of the children's services authority to circulate the report locally. Within 30 working days of receiving it the authority will be required to send a copy to its relevant partners¹⁰, its Local Safeguarding Children Board partners¹¹, at least one local newspaper and at least one local radio station, if requested. It will also be required to make a copy available for inspection, free of charge, at its offices, and to supply a copy on demand for which it may make a reasonable charge. It is open to the authority to publicise the report in other ways, for example through its website or by sending copies to services or service users.

73. The children's services authority will be required, consulting its partners, to make a written statement of proposed action, or action plan, in light of the report. It will have 70 working days from receipt to do this. It will be required to send the action plan to those groups (see paragraph 72) in receipt of the report, and to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools and the Secretary of State; to make it available for inspection free of charge at its offices; and to supply a copy on demand for which it may make a reasonable charge.

74. The regulations do not stipulate the form or content of the action plan, other than saying that it must state when action is proposed to be taken. The action plan is not required to be approved by the Secretary of State or by inspectorates. Guidance on the form or content of the action plan would be for the Secretary of State.

75. The children's services authority, with its partners, will wish to monitor implementation of the action plan. The action plan and progress on its implementation can assist the authority and, and its central government partners, in determining future local priorities. Where an inspection finds services to have significant failings, central government expects to discuss the problems with children's services authorities and their partners, and agree tailored solutions. Where agreement on a solution cannot be reached then, as a last resort, there are powers in the Children Act 2004 for central government to intervene across education and children's social services.

Follow-up inspection

76. If a joint area review raises a concern about a single service or function, in exceptional circumstances, a detailed follow-up inspection may then be

¹⁰ Relevant partners are those listed in section 10 of the Children Act 2004, and any person or body with which the authority makes arrangements under section 10(1)(c) of the Act. Listed partners are local district councils, police authorities and chief officers of police, probation boards, youth offending teams, strategic health authorities and primary care trusts, and those providing services under section 114 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000; and the Learning and Skills Council for England.

¹¹ Board partners are listed in section 13 of the Children Act 2004. They include several "relevant partners", and also local NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts, governors of any secure training centre or prison which ordinarily detains children; and the Children and Family Courts Advisory and Support Service.

commissioned to examine more precisely the causes and depth of that concern and/or whether the initial causes for concern have been addressed. Within the three-year programme to 2008, the conduct of a second joint area review, whether in full or on a more selective basis, will be exceptional. There may be a very small number of local areas reviewed in the first year of the programme and found unsatisfactory in a number of ways where a second review before December 2008 may be appropriate.

Quality of joint area reviews

Quality assurance

77. A high priority will be given to quality assurance and procedures will cover each stage of the process. Procedures are compatible with the corporate assessment. There will be effective training of and support to inspectors to ensure rigour and consistency. The lead inspector will be responsible for quality assurance of the review, working within agreed procedures. The lead inspector will ensure that there has been compliance with a code of conduct, judgements are soundly based on effectively recorded evidence and the judgements included in the report reflect accurately the evidence and findings.

78. Procedures will be put into place to ensure an objective approach to quality assurance particularly during the fieldwork. These procedures will be proportionate to risk and may involve inspection managers in making telephone calls and/or visits to local areas during the fieldwork to check on the progress and conduct of the review. Following the review, local services may be requested to complete questionnaires to identify the value of the process and to check that procedures have been followed.

79. Particular attention will be paid to assuring the quality of the inspection reports to ensure that judgements are transparent, based on evidence and clearly expressed. Each report will be read and commented on by an experienced inspector before being discussed by a small committee of senior inspection managers representing the contributory inspectorates and commissions. Final approval to release the report will rest with Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools.

Processes for complaints

80. Detailed procedures for processing complaints will be published separately. They will be handled according to the following principles:

- arrangements will be conducted, speedily and people will be kept informed
- processes will be consistent, treating people in similar circumstances in similar ways
- investigations and further enquiries, where necessary, will be thorough and objective
- procedures for complaints will be considered and responded to in a fair and even-handed way
- a full response will be provided which addresses all the issues raised

- confidentiality will be respected
- clear information will be provided on what to do if people are unhappy with the response
- procedures will be regularly monitored.

Evaluation

81. The principles on which evaluation will be based are given in the *Framework for the Inspection of Children's Services* and cover both the conduct and benefits of inspection. Joint area reviews involve a new process and are being designed to cover a range of services in what is, proportionally, a modest amount of inspection time.

82. Evaluation of joint area reviews will be built in from the outset. Beyond the pilots, evaluation will cover the first set of joint area reviews in autumn 2005, so that arrangements can be revised, where necessary, from April 2006. Evaluation will cover the manageability of the process for councils and their partners and the way in which joint area reviews work together with corporate assessment. Evaluation will draw on the views of those involved in the reviews, as well as on the views of others, including readers of the reports. An independent perspective will help to establish a full picture of the process and potential value of the reviews.

Annex A. Outcomes and key judgements

The purpose of the joint area review

- to describe and analyse the outcomes achieved by children and young people in each local area
- to evaluate the effectiveness, taken together, of local services in improving the outcomes for children and young people (and, in particular, to evaluate how services work together to this end).

In meeting these intentions, the inspection and review will not cover each key judgement with new fieldwork. Many will be judged on the basis of existing evidence from performance indicators, previous inspections, self-assessment and documentation. The review will focus on a small number of key judgements which are the most important to improving outcomes for children and young people in the area.

Being healthy

Outcomes:

Children and young people are: physically healthy; mentally and emotionally healthy; sexually healthy; have healthy lifestyles; choose not to take illegal drugs.

Key judgements:

- parents and carers receive support to keep their children healthy
- healthy lifestyles are promoted for children and young people
- action is taken to promote children and young people's physical health
- action is taken to promote children and young people's mental health
- looked after children's health needs are addressed
- the health needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are addressed.

Staying safe

Outcomes:

Children and young people are: safe from maltreatment, neglect, violence and sexual exploitation; safe from accidental injury and death; safe from bullying and discrimination; safe from crime and anti-social behaviour in and out of school; have security and stability and are cared for.

Key judgements:

- children and young people and their carers are informed about key risks to their safety and how to deal with them
- children and young people are provided with a safe environment
- the incidence of child abuse and neglect is minimised
- agencies collaborate to safeguard children according to the requirements of the current government guidance
- services are effective in establishing the identify and whereabouts of all children and young people 0–16
- action is taken to avoid children and young people having to be looked after

- looked after children live in safe environments and are protected from abuse and exploitation
- children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities live in safe environments and are protected from abuse and exploitation.

Enjoying and achieving

Outcomes:

Children and young people are: ready for school; attend and enjoy school; achieve stretching national educational standards at primary school; achieve personal and social development and enjoy recreation; achieve stretching national educational standards at secondary school.

Key judgements:

- parents and carers receive support in helping their children to enjoy and achieve
- early years provision promotes children's development and well-being and helps them meet early learning goals
- action is taken to ensure that education provision 5–16 is of good quality
- children and young people are enabled and encouraged to attend and enjoy school and to achieve highly
- educational provision is made for children who do not attend school
- all children and young people can access a range of recreational activities, including play and voluntary learning provision
- children and young people who are looked after are helped to enjoy and achieve
- children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to enjoy and achieve.

Making a positive contribution

Outcomes:

Children and young people engage in decision-making and support the community and environment; engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour in and out of school; develop positive relationships and choose not to bully and discriminate; develop self-confidence and successfully deal with significant life changes and challenges; develop enterprising behaviour.

Key judgements:

- children and young people are supported in developing socially and emotionally
- children and young people, particularly those from vulnerable groups, are supported in managing changes and responding to challenges in their lives
- children and young people are encouraged to participate in decision making and in supporting the community
- action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour by children and young people
- action is taken to prevent offending and to reduce re-offending by children and young people
- children and young people who are looked after are helped to make a

- positive contribution
- children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to make a positive contribution

Achieving economic well-being

Outcomes:

Children and young people: engage in further education, employment or training on leaving school; are ready for employment; live in decent homes and sustainable communities; have access to transport and material goods; live in households free from low-income.

Key judgements:

- action is taken by partners to support families in maximising their economic well-being
- young people 11–19 are helped to prepare for working life
- action is taken to ensure that 14–19 education and training is planned and delivered in a coordinated way, and to ensure that education and training (16–19) is of good quality
- community regeneration initiatives address the needs of children and young people
- action is taken to ensure that young people have decent housing
- children and young people who are looked after are helped to achieve economic well-being
- children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are helped to achieve economic well-being.

Service Management

Key judgements:

- ambition
- prioritisation
- capacity
- performance management.

Annex B. Summary of arrangements for joint area reviews and CPA corporate assessment and their implications for councils and partners

