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*Every child matters:*

Joint area reviews of  
children's services:  
proposals for consultation

December 2004

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The paper sets out proposals for how joint area reviews of services for children and young people in a children's services authority area will be carried out.<sup>1</sup>
2. The Children Act 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 Chief Inspector of Schools. A review must be conducted by two or more of the designated inspectorates or commissions. It is expected that the Secretary of State will request 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 Inspection of Children's Services](#), a draft of which is under consultation,<sup>2</sup> defines principles to be applied in all relevant inspections of services for children and young people. It sets out how they will report on contributions to improving outcomes for children and young people in terms of their being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being. The findings of these 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](#).<sup>3</sup> 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, together with the assessments made by HMI Constabulary and the Healthcare Commission, will provide the basis for decisions on whether new fieldwork is required in joint area reviews.

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<sup>1</sup> The coverage of joint area reviews includes all services for children and young people aged 0-19, whether statutory, voluntary or private providers, where they are in receipt of public funds or other public resources. It will also cover services for a) those over 19 who are receiving services as care leavers under sections 23C to 24D of the Children Act 1989 and b) those over 19 but under 25 with learning difficulties within the meaning of section 13 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and receiving services under that Act.

<sup>2</sup> *Every child matters: The Framework for Inspection of Children's Services* (available on [www.ofsted.gov.uk/everychildconsultation](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/everychildconsultation)).

<sup>3</sup> *Every child matters: Annual performance assessment of council services for children* (available on [www.ofsted.gov.uk/everychildconsultation](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/everychildconsultation)). 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.

5. [Key judgements and evidence](#) to be used in joint area reviews and annual performance assessments are set out separately.<sup>4</sup> 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. They also reflect the National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services ('the Children's NSF') (September 2004).

#### 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 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.
- 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 42 key judgements, 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, with some fieldwork always being conducted on safeguarding children and young people. Fieldwork will include tracking the experiences of individual children and young people and neighbourhood studies.
- Analysis and fieldwork will be completed within a six-week period.
- Each joint area review will lead to a single published report.

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<sup>4</sup> *Every child matters: Inspection of children's services: key judgements and evidence* (available on [www.ofsted.gov.uk/everychildconsultation](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/everychildconsultation)).

## PURPOSE OF JOINT AREA REVIEWS

6. Joint area reviews will set out to describe what life is like for children and young people growing up in the area and evaluate the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being.

7. 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 are well prepared to secure 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 publicly funded services in the area. They will judge the contributions made by the council's services overall and make specific judgements about the quality and management 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 gauged and contributions to outcomes evaluated.

8. Joint area reviews will report on the well-being of all children and young people in a local area. They will cover universal, targeted and specialist 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. In the case of children and young people placed in residential establishments, this will include the duty of care of the placing council for children and young people placed outside the council area.<sup>5</sup> Depending on local circumstances, outcomes for other vulnerable groups may also be closely analysed and service contributions to them evaluated. For instance, it may be appropriate for a review team to give particular attention to children of Travellers in a local area.

## SCOPE OF JOINT AREA REVIEWS

### Key judgements

9. The maximum scope of reviews is defined by 42 key judgements on service contributions to outcomes for children and young people. (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.

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<sup>5</sup> For details of the assessment of the contribution of settings, see *Every child matters: Inspection of children's services: key judgements and evidence*.

10. 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 be made on the basis of analysis of performance data, self-assessment and documents. No more than 10 of the judgements will be selected for enquiries involving fieldwork. The selection will be risk-based and reflect the priorities for improving outcomes in the local area. Where evidence is not sufficient to make a judgement, the report will say this.

### **Service management**

11. 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 and value for money. Evaluation will focus on the way in which services work together to meet the requirements of the Children Act and how the views and needs of children and young people are taken into account in determining service provision.

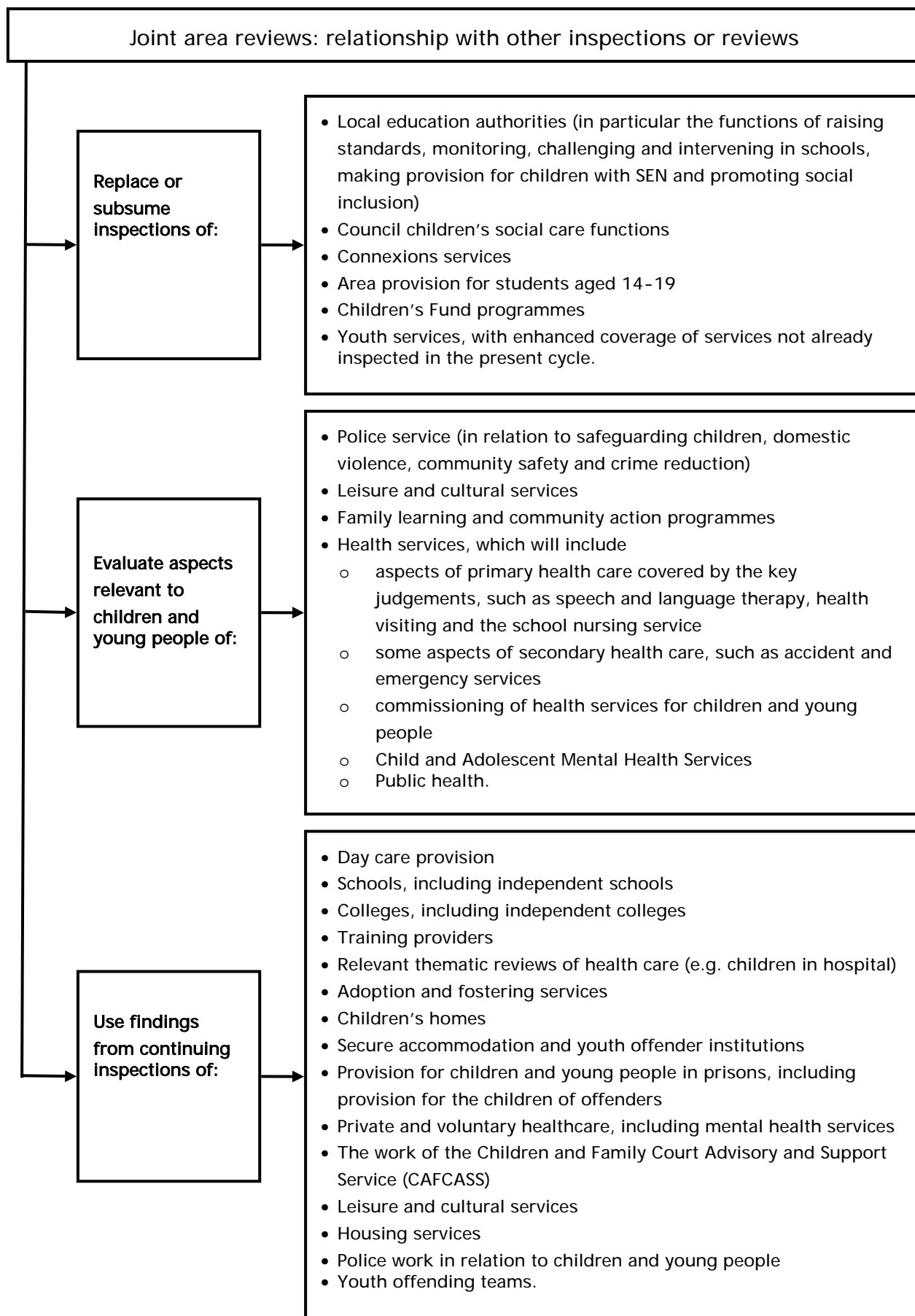
12. Findings from studies of service contributions will be integrated with the findings of CPA corporate assessment on strategic management to form judgements of the management and capacity of the council's principal education and social care services. Where there is sufficient evidence, judgements will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

### **Services provided by the voluntary and community sector**

13. 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 the voluntary and community organisations are engaged with other partners in decisions about the strategic development of provision and how far investment in building the capacity of the voluntary and community sector through joint commissioning arrangements has helped 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.

### **Relationship with other inspections**

14. The table below sets the relationship of joint area reviews with current and continuing inspections, reviews or assessments. It shows those existing inspections which will be replaced or subsumed by joint area reviews and those continuing inspections from which findings will be drawn.



15. The use of findings from inspections of secure accommodation and youth offender institutions will reflect the fact that these settings are nationally managed and often accommodate young people from different parts of the country.

#### *Co-ordinating separate inspections*

16. 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 co-ordinate wherever possible the continuing programme of regulatory inspections of adoption and fostering services with the timings of joint area reviews.

17. Separate inspections will continue of **youth offending teams** conducted by multi-disciplinary inspection teams led by HMI Probation. When possible, those inspections will be programmed to take place at the same time as the joint area review. This will enable the areas of potential duplication to be reduced by sharing documents and exchanging relevant evidence and emerging findings so that any shared areas for inspection will only be inspected once.

#### *The link with corporate assessment for the CPA*

18. Joint area reviews will normally be conducted at the same time as the CPA corporate assessment of single-tier or county councils. Annex B outlines how the link between joint area reviews and corporate assessments will work in practice. Complementary processes, including those for self-assessment, will be used and inspection judgements shared. Judgements about council strategy will be derived from corporate assessment, with evidence from studies of service contributions informing those judgements. In turn, the findings of joint area reviews on outcomes for children and young people will feed into the corporate assessment.

### **COMPOSITION OF THE REVIEW TEAM**

19. All inspectorates and commissions will contribute to the compilation of information for reviews from the exchange of existing inspection findings and performance data. Fieldwork review teams will be multi-disciplinary and will always include inspectors from at least two bodies. Teams will have between three and eight members, with the number depending on the extent of fieldwork. Fieldwork review teams will normally include inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and the Audit Commission, and, where appropriate, the Healthcare Commission, HMI Constabulary and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI). Inspectors from different backgrounds will have knowledge of the range of services which are being



inspected and will contribute to the collection of evidence on all services. Leaders of review teams will normally be inspectors from CSCI and Ofsted, although they may also be drawn from other contributing inspectorates.

20. The lead inspector of the joint area review will allocate tasks within the team, working within the overall arrangements set by the 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.

21. Where joint area reviews and CPA corporate assessment are running together, an Audit Commission inspector will be a member of both teams in order to ensure co-ordination between the enquiries and the findings of the teams. In joint area reviews, this link 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.

22. The review team will plan ways of involving young people in inspections themselves, 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.

## **PROGRAMME AND NOTIFICATION**

### **Programme**

23. The programme of reviews will be initiated by a request from the Secretary of State. Subject to the Secretary of State's approval of the joint area review programme, the full indicative programme of joint area reviews and corporate assessments will be announced in a form which gives the precise dates of reviews taking places 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.

24. The indicative programme of reviews and corporate assessment will be drawn up to take account of:

- the overall Comprehensive Performance Assessment (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
- 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.

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

- the outcomes of the [annual performance assessment](#) of council children's services
- other information about local services for children and young people available to the commissions and inspectorates.

## **Notification**

26. From 2005, notification of the precise date of a joint area review 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 co-ordinate the contributions of different services to the review. This will include co-ordinating self-assessment material for the review team, 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

27. Shown below is an outline of the stages of a review, which will be co-ordinated with the stages of corporate assessment where the processes are running simultaneously.

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<b>Setting up</b>	<p>A meeting will be held between the review team leader and the director of children's services (or equivalent) and a briefing will be given to other officers and to members of the council and its partners about the scope and organisation of the review.</p> <p>These meetings will confirm:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the basis for planning the review programme</li><li>• the selection of key judgements on which fieldwork will be carried out</li><li>• the arrangements for case tracking and neighbourhood studies</li><li>• the timetable for the review and its reporting.</li></ul> <p>Consultation with children and young people and their parents and carers will take place following these meetings.</p>
<b>Analysis</b>	<p>This stage will involve the whole review team and will take 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 week, the review team will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• identified hypotheses to follow up in the fieldwork</li><li>• established detailed plans for the fieldwork.</li></ul>
<b>Fieldwork</b>	<p>Fieldwork will normally take place over a two-week period. The focus will be on gathering evidence directly from children, young people, their families and carers, and front-line workers. At the end of this stage, inspectors will have gathered the evidence on which to base their findings.</p>
<b>Reporting</b>	<p>When the review team is on site, the team leader will discuss the emerging issues with the director of children's services (or equivalent) and other senior officers, and elected members as appropriate. At the end of the fieldwork, the team leader will provide headline feedback.</p> <p>Within four weeks, a draft report will be sent to the director of children's services (or equivalent) who will be asked to co-ordinate written comments on accuracy within two weeks. After this, members of the team will meet senior officers and members of the local strategic partnership to discuss the findings. The report will be issued about four weeks later.</p>

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28. A summary of the implications of joint area review arrangements for councils and their partners appears in Annex C. The demands made on councils for documentation, organisation of site visits and involvement in interviews are significantly less than for the separate inspections of education and social care services which joint area reviews replace or subsume.

### **Gathering evidence**

29. Detailed enquiries in the review will not cover the full range of [key judgements](#) or require a uniform level of fieldwork. The guiding principles will be the focus on those issues particularly affecting outcomes for children, the desirability of reducing fieldwork to the minimum and the need to tailor it to the range and depth of likely issues in the area. Annual performance assessment will play a major role in broadly determining the key judgements which will require fieldwork in a joint area review. Enquiries on a maximum of 10 key judgements will form the focus on the fieldwork; this maximum number should allow for coverage, where necessary, of service contributions across the five outcomes. Service contributions to staying safe will always be inspected through some fieldwork in each review, in view of the high risks involved.

### **Setting up**

30. The lead inspector will brief the director of children's services (or equivalent), leading councillors and partners about the scope, organisation and timetable of the review. 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 neighbourhoods will be identified for detailed study.

### **Consultation with children and young people**

31. Consideration of children's and young people's views and experiences will be at the heart of joint area reviews and their views about services will be gathered early in each review. Some 500 children and young people will be asked to participate in a web-based survey. They will be selected by the review team 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. The views of children and young people will inform the inquiries to be pursued. 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.

## **Self-assessment**

32. The director of children's services (or equivalent) will be asked to co-ordinate the completion of a self-assessment with key partners covering relevant local services. It will allow the services in the local area to make their own analysis of key indicators, the views of service users, in particular children and young people, and to assess activities to demonstrate the effectiveness with which they have worked together, how far the priorities have been implemented and the extent to which the actions taken have improved outcomes for children and young people.

33. 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. From 2006, the approach to self-assessment will take into account the new requirements for the production and review of a plan covering services for children and young people.

34. The self-assessment required for annual performance assessments and joint area reviews will be presented as far as possible in a standard common format. The approach will be consistent with the corporate assessment and will not require the duplication of information. The annual performance assessment will use the self-assessment to judge the effectiveness of services provided by the council, whereas the joint area review will use it to assess the contribution of all services. In both the joint area review and the annual performance assessment the quality of the self-assessment will contribute to the judgement of service management.

35. Self-assessment is expected to be an on-going, integral feature of evaluation, planning and improvement of local services. 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 provided, if this is required.

36. It is expected that the self-assessment will include:

- a succinct review of salient contextual features, including information on service provision and budgets
- an analysis of current outcomes for children and young people

- the contribution of local services to achieving and improving outcomes for children and young people
- salient features of service management, including the steps taken to consult children and young people, the effectiveness with which services work together, and value for money.

## **Analysis**

37. This stage will take 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 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, residents (including parents and 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. A detailed inspection fieldwork plan will be finalised at the end of this stage.

## **Fieldwork**

38. Fieldwork will normally take two weeks and include enquiries on no more than 10 key judgements selected because they are of particular local significance. 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 have a range of individual and group discussions on specific issues with children and young people, often in order to ascertain the views of those in particular neighbourhoods, age-groups or hard-to-reach groups. In addition, the inspections of settings, which contribute to the evidence base for the joint area review, will always include consideration of the views of children and young people.

## *Case tracking*

39. The purpose of case tracking is to assess the nature and effectiveness of agencies' involvement with children and young people through a detailed examination of a small sample of carefully selected children and young people who are supported by more than one service. Case tracking will involve: the selection of sample cases for an in-depth scrutiny; discussions with the children and young people, if possible; and interviews with parents and carers, key staff and managers.

### *Neighbourhood studies*

40. 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 for children and young people
- there are examples of co-ordinated working between agencies.

41. As part of the self-assessment, 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 Sure Start local programmes.

### *Meetings*

42. 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, 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. A visit will 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'.

## Making judgements

43. Judgements will be made on a four-point scale agreed by the Local Services Inspectorate Forum. The review team will reach its 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.

44. Judgements will be made as follows.

45. Firstly, the review teams will describe each of the outcomes for children and young people in the local area with reference to outcomes nationally and for similar areas (see [Inspection of children's services: key judgements and evidence](#)). 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.

46. Secondly, judgements will be made on the contribution of services to each outcome, in two sets: the contribution of publicly funded services collectively, and the contribution of the council's services (see [Inspection of children's services: key judgements and evidence](#)). 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 outcomes will be assessed, with account taken of the different governance of individual services.

47. Thirdly, judgements will be made on the quality of service management (see [Inspection of children's services: key judgements and evidence](#)). 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. The 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 children and young people about their provision and its potential improvement
- 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 for services to co-operate. 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. Procurement and commissioning will also be considered. Judgements will address current performance and how well value for money is managed, and 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
- assess the capacity to improve, which will involve a judgement of the capacity to improve of the publicly funded 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

48. 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.

<b>Summary</b>
A summary of main findings on key outcomes for children and young people, the effectiveness and efficiency of services, and what needs to be done, and by whom, to improve services.
<b>Context</b>
An account of key features of the local context and the organisation and funding of service provision.
<b>Outcomes</b>
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.
<b>Service contribution to outcomes</b>
An evaluation of how well universal 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, performance management and securing value for money.

49. Within four weeks, 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 co-ordinate written comments on its accuracy. After this, members of the team will meet the members of the local strategic partnership, including the lead council member for children and young people and senior managers, to discuss the findings. The report will be issued about four weeks later.

50. 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.

51. The report will be written so that it communicates the findings to service users as well as service providers. The main report will have the sections set out below and each section will include recommendations. Recommendations will take account of local governance arrangements when referring to accountability for improvement.

### **ACTION AFTER THE REVIEW**

52. It is expected that regulations will require the children's services authority to publish the report within 30 days of receiving it and an action plan within 70 days of receiving it.

### **Follow-up inspection**

53. 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 commissioned to examine more precisely the causes and depth of that concern. Within the first three-year programme, 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

54. The lead inspector will be responsible for quality assurance of the review, working within agreed procedures. The lead inspector will ensure that there is compliance with a joint code of conduct and that judgements are soundly based and corporate.

### Management of complaints

55. A policy and procedure will provide a consistent basis for ensuring that any complaints are thoroughly investigated and appropriate action is taken as a result.

### Evaluation

56. The principles on which evaluation will be based are given in the [Framework for 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.

57. 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 what life is like for children and young people in each local area
- to evaluate the effectiveness of local services in improving the outcomes for children and young people.

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 life-styles and choose not to take illegal drugs.

#### Key judgements:

- o Parents are helped to ensure that their children are healthy
- o Healthy lifestyles are promoted for children and young people
- o Action is taken to minimise environmental health risks for children and young people
- o Children and young people's health needs are identified and assessed at an early stage
- o Children and young people's physical health is supported
- o Children and young people's mental health is supported.

### STAYING SAFE

#### Outcomes:

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

#### Key judgements:

- o children and young people and their carers are informed about key risks and how to deal with them
- o steps are taken to provide children and young people with a safe environment
- o steps are taken to minimise the incidence of child abuse and neglect
- o child protection arrangements meet the requirements of *Working Together to Safeguard Children*.

## ENJOYING AND ACHIEVING

### Outcomes:

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

### Key judgements:

- o parents and carers are supported in helping children and young people to enjoy and achieve
- o early years provision prepares children for school and helps them meet early learning goals
- o children and young people attend and enjoy school
- o children and young people are supported in developing personally and academically
- o action is taken to ensure that settings provide good quality education
- o the needs of children unable to attend school are met
- o children and young people's recreational needs are met.

## MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION

### Outcomes:

Children and young people engage in decision-making, 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 changes and challenges; and develop enterprising behaviour.

### Key judgements:

- o children and young people and their carers are helped to develop socially
- o children and young people are helped to manage changes and respond to challenges in their lives
- o children and young people are encouraged to contribute to decision making and to support the community
- o action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour.

## 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 communities; have access to transport and material goods; and live in households free from low-income.

### Key judgements:

- o day care is available to meet the needs of parents in work or seeking work
- o young people are prepared for working life
- o action is taken to ensure that 14-19 education is planned in a co-ordinated way
- o action is taken to ensure that settings provide good quality education
- o community regeneration initiatives address the needs of children and young people and their families
- o families and young people have access to decent homes.

#### **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LOOKED AFTER BY THE COUNCIL**

##### **Outcomes:**

Children and young people are healthy; safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribute and achieve economic well-being.

##### **Key judgements:**

- o Steps are taken to avoid children and young people having to become looked after
- o Looked after children and their parents are provided with opportunities to express their views and their views are listened to
- o Steps are taken to secure a range of care placements which deliver care and support and develop children and young people's cultural, religious and linguistic heritage
- o Looked after children's health needs are addressed
- o Looked after children are supported in achieving educationally
- o Looked after children are enabled to enjoy a range of cultural and leisure activities
- o Looked after children are prepared for leaving care and supported thereafter.

#### **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND DISABILITIES**

##### **Outcomes:**

Children and young people are healthy; safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution; achieve economic well-being.

##### **Key judgements:**

- o Assessment, intervention and review processes identify the help children and young people and their carers need
- o Children and young people have opportunities to be actively involved in decisions affecting them
- o Steps are taken to meet the educational, health, care and recreational needs of children and young people and to help them lead as normal a life as possible
- o There is managed transition from setting to setting, and from children's to adult services.

#### **SERVICE MANAGEMENT**

##### **Key judgements:**

- o ambition
- o prioritisation
- o capacity
- o performance management.

## ANNEX B: JOINT AREA REVIEWS AND CORPORATE ASSESSMENTS

**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 on 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, and its score, will be provided by the joint area review. In addition, it will provide examples of outcomes and activity which can be reported within other themes.

**Joint area reviews** cover 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.

The intention is normally to run the processes together. We see benefits in three ways:

- 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.

Both processes will be focused and differentiated so as to minimise fieldwork. They will use common criteria for judging leadership and management. Sequences of inspection activity will be co-ordinated and the reports normally published simultaneously. The approach to self-assessment will also be common. It will work at different levels. Self-assessment in corporate assessment will cover the council's performance across all areas of its responsibility. 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. Judgements of the quality of self-assessment will be shared between the teams.

On-site planning of the two processes will be undertaken jointly by the lead inspectors of the two teams and with the council and its partners. 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.

An Audit Commission inspector will be a member of both teams. The teams will ensure that the on-site programme is co-ordinated. 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 (or equivalent), the lead council member for children and young people and members of the children and young people's strategic partnership may be interviewed jointly or by both teams. Managers and staff of services for children will be interviewed by the joint area review team.

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.

Feedback will be co-ordinated to ensure clarity and consistency. 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.

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.



## ANNEX C: SUMMARY OF JOINT AREA REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCILS AND PARTNERS

