

Westminster City Council

Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

and

Review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board¹

Inspection date: 11 January 2016 to 4 February 2016

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Children’s services in Westminster City Council are outstanding	
1. Children who need help and protection	Good
2. Children looked after and achieving permanence	Outstanding
2.1 Adoption performance	Outstanding
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
3. Leadership, management and governance	Outstanding

¹ Ofsted produces this report under its power to combine reports in accordance with section 152 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This report includes the report of the inspection of local authority functions carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the report of the review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board carried out under the Local Safeguarding Children Boards (Review) Regulations 2013.

Executive summary

Children's services in Westminster, augmented by the exemplary tri-borough partnership with Hammersmith and Fulham, and Kensington and Chelsea, benefit from outstanding, highly ambitious and confident operational and political leadership. Consequently, almost all vulnerable children and young people who come into contact with children's services receive good or outstanding support. Significant and sustained improvements have been made since the last inspection in October 2011, when services were judged to be good. Leaders and managers demonstrate a strong track record of effective, high-quality service delivery.

Rigorous performance management means that senior leaders are extremely knowledgeable about the performance of services provided to children. An exceptional performance framework supports the delivery of social work to a very high and, in most cases, outstanding quality.

Considerable economies of scale are achieved through combined administrative and management arrangements across the tri-borough partnership. Solid governance strategies are delivered effectively by the chief executive, the lead member and statutory partnership boards such as the health and well-being board. All of these link regularly and directly to the tri-borough executive director of children's services (DCS), who manages this complex arrangement exceptionally well, within a mature culture of appropriate challenge.

A dedicated and highly coherent model of commissioning ensures that children and families in Westminster are offered extensive, holistic early help, and targeted and specialist services. These are making a vast difference in keeping them safe from harm. This child-centred approach is strongly supported by the work of innovation-funded, advanced and specialist practitioners and clinicians.

Excellent services are consistently delivered using the tri-borough partnership's well-developed 'focus on practice' model of social work, which places a high value on relationship-building between children and their social workers. Exemplary application of this highly innovative model is supported by low social work caseloads.

Young people at risk of child sexual exploitation receive excellent support, which is delivered with great sensitivity and persistence by dedicated professionals. Robust monitoring and understanding of children missing is driven assertively and confidently by a missing children coordinator. More work is needed to ensure that all children missing from home and care are routinely offered a 'return home' interview.

Westminster has an extensive network of tri-borough and in-borough services to help children and families address difficulties concerning domestic abuse, substance misuse and parental mental ill health. Consequently, children and young people are protected from harm.

Services for children looked after or those requiring adoption are outstanding. The local authority is a highly ambitious corporate parent. A child looked after in Westminster is surrounded by a team of professionals that works closely and

collaboratively to help them achieve in life. As a result, children and young people do well in education, placement stability is good and children feel safe.

Westminster care leavers receive an effective, aspirational service, reflected in the excellent work undertaken by the virtual school, personal advisers and social workers in promoting an extensive range of options for all young people.

Children and young people at risk of radicalisation, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and honour-based violence are protected through a range of excellent initiatives.

Excellent workforce planning means that the tri-borough partnership has a very stable and experienced workforce, and this enhances consistency and quality of service. Well-trained and impressive social workers are able to retain their expertise in practice and pursue career opportunities other than management, if they so wish.

Contents

Executive summary	2
The local authority	5
Information about this local authority area	5
Recommendations	7
Summary for children and young people	8
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	9
The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence	15
Leadership, management and governance	27
The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)	34
Executive summary	34
Recommendations	36
Information about this inspection	43

The local authority

Information about this local authority area²

Previous Ofsted inspections

- The local authority operates no children's homes.
- The previous inspection of the local authority's safeguarding arrangements was in September 2011. The local authority was judged to be good.
- The previous inspection of the local authority's services for looked after children was in September 2011. The local authority was judged to be good.

Local leadership

- The director of children's services (DCS) has been in post since September 2011.
- The DCS is executive director of children's services for the tri-borough partnership, which comprises Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham, and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.
- The chair of the LSCB has been in post since April 2012.
- The LSCB is shared with Hammersmith and Fulham, and the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

Children living in this area

- Approximately 40,694 children and young people under the age of 18 live in Westminster. This is 17.2% of the total population of the area.
- Approximately 36.7% of the local authority's children are living in poverty.
- The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
 - in primary schools is 31% (the national average is 16%)
 - in secondary schools is 32% (the national average is 14%).
- Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 57% of all children living in the area, compared with 21.5% in the country as a whole.
- The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are Other Ethnic, and Asian or Asian British.
- The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:

² The local authority was given the opportunity to review this section of the report and has updated it with local unvalidated data where this was available.

- in primary schools is 70% (the national average is 19%)
- in secondary schools is 64% (the national average is 15%).

Child protection in this area

- At 31 March 2015, 1,240 children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist children's service. This is a reduction from 1,473 at 31 March 2014.
- At 31 March 2015, 113 children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan. This is an increase from 99 at 31 March 2014.
- At 31 March 2015, 10 children lived in a privately arranged fostering placement. This is an increase from five at 31 March 2014.
- Since the last inspection, two serious incident notifications have been submitted to Ofsted and two serious case reviews have been completed or were ongoing at the time of the inspection.

Children looked after in this area

- At 31 March 2015, 179 children were being looked after by the local authority (a rate of 50 per 10,000 children). This is an increase from 176 (49 per 10,000 children) at 31 March 2014.
 - Of this number:
 - 138 (or 78%) live outside the local authority area
 - seven live in residential children's homes. Of these, 100% live outside the authority area
 - three live in residential special schools³. Of these, 100% live outside the authority area
 - 139 live with foster families. Of these, 80% live outside the authority area
 - two live with parents, and both live within the authority area
 - 31 children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- In the last 12 months:
 - there have been 14 adoptions
 - six children became subject of special guardianship orders
 - 78 children ceased to be looked after, of whom five (6%) subsequently returned to be looked after

³ These are residential special schools that look after children for 295 days or fewer per year.

- 10 children and young people ceased to be looked after and moved on to independent living
- four children and young people ceased to be looked after and are now living in houses of multiple occupation.

Recommendations

1. Ensure that all cases of children in need are systematically evaluated by managers regularly, focusing on whether changes are being achieved and sustained.
2. Ensure that children missing from home and care are routinely offered a return home interview, and that aggregated information from interviews informs service planning.
3. Review out-of-hours arrangements to ensure that children and young people are offered a standard of practice consistent with daytime services.
4. Ensure that personal advisers have frequent contact with care leavers in custody and that managers routinely review the quality of work with these young people.

Summary for children and young people

- Services for children and families in Westminster are of very high quality.
- Children and families are provided with a wide range of services to help and support them to feel safe. Social workers act quickly when children and young people need help and protection.
- Social workers, teachers, police and health workers work together well to make sure that things get better for children and families. This means that problems are often sorted out at an early stage.
- Social workers spend time getting to know children and their parents. This means that they understand what is happening and are really good at helping families to make positive changes. They are very good at listening to children and understanding things that are important to each child, such as how they feel, where they want to live and what needs to happen to make things better.
- Children and young people at risk of sexual or gang exploitation are helped by dedicated, caring workers to make them safe.
- Children and their families who arrive from different countries are provided with good help and advice.
- Senior leaders and councillors have a passion to make things better for all children. They want them to do well. This is making a positive difference to young people's lives.
- Social workers care about the children and young people they work with and do all that they can to help children live safely with their families. Some children and young people can only be supported and protected by being taken into care. When this happens, they are helped to live with their brothers and sisters, if possible.
- Children and young people in care benefit from social workers who know them well, are committed and skilled and who do not give up on them. They are helped to keep in contact with their families. Children and young people who live with foster carers or live in children's homes are looked after well. Foster carers are supported well by the council.
- If young people want to stay with their foster carers when they reach 18, they are helped to do so. Young people are supported to attend university and college, or helped to find a job and safe accommodation when they leave care.
- When children need to be adopted, this happens quickly. They are adopted with their brothers and sisters whenever this is possible. Westminster City Council tries hard to find adoptive families for as many children as possible. Families who adopt children have plenty of support to help make sure that they can care for the children until they become adults.
- Children and young people are provided with many opportunities to have their views heard. This is making a positive difference to how services are provided across the city.

<p>The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection</p>	<p>Good</p>
<p>Summary</p> <p>Children and families in Westminster are offered extensive and timely early help through accessible, high-quality, universal and targeted services, protecting them from harm.</p> <p>There is widespread understanding among professionals of the thresholds for access to social care intervention. Contacts and referrals for children in need and at risk are managed promptly in the tri-borough multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH). There is some delay in starting assessments for a small number of children.</p> <p>Social work practice is patient, tenacious and respectful. Issues of increased risks to children on open cases, when identified, are escalated appropriately. Case records illustrate strong and thorough direct work. The quality of social work assessments is consistently good or outstanding, demonstrating effective and thoughtful engagement with families.</p> <p>Good-quality children in need plans are evident in the majority of cases, but a minority of children remain on these plans for too long. A small number of plans and reviews lack clarity. Child protection enquiries are carried out by experienced and knowledgeable social workers. Strategy meetings are timely and involve all the relevant key agencies. Child protection plans are concise. Effective planning and reviewing quickly reduce risks to children.</p> <p>Management oversight is a clear strength, with social workers receiving regular, reflective supervision, providing clear direction and a shared ownership of risk, from the frontline to senior management.</p> <p>Young people at risk of child sexual exploitation receive excellent support. Children who go missing from school are identified quickly, with prompt and effective action taken to address absences. More work is needed to ensure that all children missing from home and care are offered a return home interview.</p> <p>Children and young people at risk of radicalisation, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and honour-based violence are protected through a range of highly effective initiatives.</p> <p>The tri-borough partnership's out-of-hours service ensures that children are safe. However, action is needed to make sure that formal safeguarding procedures are followed routinely and that social workers always accompany children to foster care.</p>	

5. Children in Westminster benefit from a well-coordinated array of services that provide help at an early stage. The pathway into targeted early help provision is clear, with three multi-agency locality teams considering new referrals and both 'step down' and 'step up' referrals from social workers at weekly meetings. An extensive range of services are provided through children's centres and schools. A 'team around the family' model considers a holistic, multi-agency perspective on families' needs. The well-established tri-borough family recovery project is part of the service network. These services are underpinned by a coherent multi-agency strategy, and this is making a significant difference in improving the lives of children and families.
6. Early help is carefully prioritised for the most vulnerable families living in the most deprived wards in the borough. Parents seen during the inspection highly valued the specific programmes they attended such as English classes, readiness for employment and parenting courses, and support with domestic abuse, mental ill-health and substance misuse. They also appreciated the accessibility of informal support at drop-in facilities at children's centres. External, independent, academic evaluations verify that parents benefit from the blend of practical and emotional support at the heart of early help provision.
7. Strong partnerships serve to protect children from harm. All referrals are prioritised by the duty social worker in the access and assessment team, using blue, green, amber and red ratings, according to the seriousness of the concern. The vast majority of referrals rated red and amber receive a timely, safe response. Although inspectors found delays in progressing a small number of child protection referrals, these do not leave children exposed to higher levels of risk. However, delayed timescales are likely to provoke uncertainty and anxiety for families affected.
8. The tri-borough partnership's multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) is an effective information gathering and sharing hub. Most children and young people benefit from an effective multi-agency response to their needs through the MASH. The co-location of staff enables highly-effective gathering of information. For example, the integrated gangs unit, the missing person coordinator working collaboratively with social workers and the police analyse information, which informs prompt action. Strong management oversight ensures that MASH recommendations are safe. In a small number of cases, MASH checks took longer than timescales designated by the colour-coded system, which led to delay in the local authority being able to act.
9. Children living in families where parental difficulties are causing instability and risk are supported by highly trained, skilled and able social workers, undertaking sensitive direct work. Social workers are supported in this work by experienced clinicians, who have undergone advanced training such as family therapy. This assists their professional thinking and approaches to complex families through systemic reflection and evaluation. Social workers told inspectors that they appreciated the 'focus on practice' systemic training they

had recently completed, as it is providing new insights and improving engagement, particularly where families are resistant to involvement.

10. Efforts to engage families, particularly male household members and fathers, are determined, tenacious and respectful. Issues of increased risks to children on open cases, when identified, are promptly escalated and plans are reviewed accordingly. In the large majority of cases, social workers quickly build strong relationships with children and families who need protection and help. Children are seen promptly and alone. Their views on their family circumstances are captured well using genograms, the 'three houses' and other direct work tools. Interpreters are used consistently for families whose first language is not English, alongside sophisticated consideration of families' cultural backgrounds and heritage. This allows, for example, for women from middle-eastern and Indian sub-continent backgrounds to talk about the domestic abuse they are experiencing, with social workers quickly putting them in touch with culturally sensitive services to support and advise them.
11. A large majority of child protection strategy meetings include key agencies involved with the child, and are held within 24 hours of the referral. Meetings are well recorded and management decisions are clear. In a minority of cases seen, timescales for completing actions were not specific and this omission contributed to delays. Obtaining parental consent to share information, or overriding it where necessary, is scrupulously considered and recorded, indicating a respectful approach to parents and carers. Thresholds for access to child protection services are well understood across the partnership. Referral rates to children's social care services are consistently lower than in comparable local authorities. The rate of referrals increased by 8% in 2014–15, from 402 per 10,000 to 411, still below the rate of similar authorities at 558 and the England rate of 548.
12. The number of child protection enquiries rose sharply over the six months preceding the inspection, with 71% concluding that an initial child protection conference (ICPC) was unnecessary. The local authority reports that this trend has recently started to decline, but the low conversion rate indicates that too many children and families may be undergoing unnecessary statutory investigations. In cases seen by inspectors, decisions both to initiate child protection enquiries and to convene ICPCs were balanced and carefully evidenced.
13. Westminster is subject to a Department for Education (DfE) exemption with regard to the timeliness of initial child protection conferences. In cases seen by inspectors, applied exemptions were appropriate, with most involving small delays in order that key professionals or parents were able to attend conferences. The large majority of ICPCs lead to children's placement on child protection plans, indicating that decision making is more appropriate here than in commencing child protection enquiries.

14. The threshold guide assists partners to consider and analyse their concerns about children. The majority of referrals to children's social care result in assessments and the provision of services. Re-referrals are much lower than in comparable authorities, suggesting that the help families and children receive addresses risks and needs, achieving sustained improvements. A joint panel of children's services and housing enables collaborative assessments for 16- and 17-year-olds who present as homeless. Young people are accommodated by the local authority when necessary. Assessments include good attention to young people's health, substance misuse and offending patterns.
15. Children and family single assessments are comprehensive and analytical. Care is taken to understand parental and family histories, with well-constructed genograms and chronologies informing this task. Consistently strong efforts are made to understand parental cultures, religious and belief systems, alongside the impact of mental illness, poverty and insecure housing. Exceptionally competent examples were seen of social workers evaluating how these, and other vulnerabilities, interact with the ability of parents to provide stable, warm and consistent care for their children.
16. Children's experiences and progress are well documented in case records, illustrating strong and thorough direct work. New information results in re-evaluations of findings, with services provided promptly during assessment periods. A DfE timescale exemption also applies to assessment timescales. About 28% of assessments took longer than 45 working days in the preceding six months. Exemptions were applied appropriately in the majority of instances seen by inspectors, with management directions and decisions clearly recorded.
17. Strong, reflective, regular supervision and case management support high standards of casework by qualified and skilled social workers. Caseloads are manageable, allowing considerable time for direct work with families.
18. Westminster has an extensive network of tri-borough and in-borough services to help children and families address difficulties concerning domestic abuse, substance misuse and parental mental ill-health. The 'focus on practice' programme provides specific content for social workers on this 'toxic trio' of vulnerabilities. Service provision is embedded in universal, targeted early help and statutory children's services. Through effective direct work, early help practitioners and domestic abuse specialists help children to voice their experiences of living in families where these parental difficulties prevail. Perpetrator and victim programmes provide sufficient capacity for work with adults. Parents are helped to understand the impact of their behaviours on their children. Some exceptionally creative, skilled interventions with families affected by these circumstances were observed during the inspection.
19. Arrangements for the identification, intervention and management of significant risk and harm by adults are understood well within formal settings such as the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) and multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA).

20. Children and young people at risk of radicalisation, female genital mutilation, forced marriage and honour-based violence are protected through a range of impressive initiatives. A thorough and bespoke needs analysis in Westminster culminated in a partnership with a local hospital, identifying and working with expectant mothers previously subjected to female genital mutilation, simultaneously assessing risk to their daughters and other young girls in their extended families. This initiative has significantly increased the number of women and girls receiving intervention. The hospital initiative is strengthened by intensive community efforts, including a virtual team based in local maternity clinics and working alongside midwives.
21. Children and families are prepared well to attend child protection conferences that are competently chaired by experienced child protection advisers (CPAs). Children are automatically provided with an advocate, unless they choose to 'opt out'. Child-friendly versions of plans are prepared by advocates with CPAs, allowing children and young people to understand the purpose and objectives of the plans. The quality of child protection plans is good, with clear outcomes underpinned by measurable objectives and actions. Risks to children are reduced quickly, with only a few children remaining on child protection plans for longer than a year, and none for longer than two years. Very few children are placed on child protection plans for a second or subsequent episode.
22. The quality and timeliness of work with children in need are more variable. A minority of children in need plans lacked clearly defined outcomes, with reviews that did not progress work with children and families purposefully. However, the majority of plans seen were comprehensive, informed by all involved agencies, and with the participation of children and their parents clearly apparent (Recommendation).
23. Significant progress has been made in addressing child sexual exploitation. Effective tri-borough multi-agency arrangements ensure swift information-sharing and identification of children and young people at risk. Senior managers regularly evaluate interventions with higher-risk young people at thorough multi-agency sexual exploitation panel (MASE) meetings. Emerging risks to young people are identified early, partly through an innovative multi-agency integrated gangs unit (IGU) that meets weekly, tracking and intervening quickly with new gang affiliates, in addition to more established members. IGU is pivotal in providing intelligence for trend analysis on missing young people. A dedicated IGU young women's worker engages with young women at risk of sexual exploitation, and other forms of abuse and control, through their gang associations. Child sexual exploitation risk assessments were used in the majority of cases seen by inspectors. MASE panel oversight was clear in these cases, although case recordings did not consistently reflect updated panel decisions.
24. A tri-borough missing children's coordinator systematically collects data, tracks cases, and delivers training and consultation for social workers. Each week, senior managers evaluate responses to children missing from home. 'Return'

interviews are not routinely offered for frequent absconders. The tri-borough strategic panel has recognised that further work is required to aggregate patterns and trends, and the local authority has developed effective plans to progress this work (Recommendation).

25. The 10 children known to be living in private fostering arrangements are assessed and supported well by a knowledgeable, dedicated worker. Effective awareness-raising work occurs regularly, which has led to a recent increase in referrals and enquiries.
26. Robust tri-borough arrangements support timely and thorough consultations and investigations regarding allegations against staff who work with children. CPAs effectively chair strategy meetings, ensuring regular tracking and recording of outcomes.
27. The local authority has good oversight of children missing education and performance data, and information is regularly evaluated. Effective, prompt action is taken by a dedicated team to identify and track children who are missing from school. Appropriate checks are made with social care, housing, police, and revenue and benefits agencies to ascertain children's whereabouts. Consequently, very few children remain missing and the large majority are placed in suitable provision within a term, which is in line with the local target. School attendance orders are initiated where necessary.
28. Local authority staff work effectively with parents who choose to educate their children at home. A designated adviser promptly contacts families, ensuring that effective action is taken to assess the suitability and quality of children's education in these circumstances. The majority of families engage well with the local authority, which also carefully liaises, as necessary, with other council departments to promote children's welfare.
29. The emergency duty team (EDT) operates on a tri-borough basis with a dedicated social work team. The team responds to crises and emergencies out of hours, ensuring that safe arrangements are in place and that protective action is taken to safeguard children if required. While EDT staff check that children are safe, staff do not always follow formal safeguarding procedures. This results in delays to initial risk assessments, which do not begin until daytime services initiate procedures. Additionally, examples were seen of children placed in care without being seen or escorted by an EDT social worker (Recommendation).

<p>The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence</p>	<p>Outstanding</p>
<p>Summary</p> <p>Children looked after in Westminster receive an outstanding service. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection in October 2011, when services were judged to be good. The tri-borough partnership has centralised and amalgamated key services for children looked after, achieving economies of scale, and improvements in consistency and in the quality of social work practice. The local authority is able to demonstrate innovative practice, with areas of outstanding and sustained progress leading to exceptionally good outcomes for young people. Children and young people have consistent and enduring relationships with committed, skilled and determined social workers.</p> <p>Decisions for children and young people to become looked after are appropriate, and informed by strong assessments and good-quality chronologies that support care planning. Decision making is timely and there is a sense of urgency in establishing permanent and stable homes for children who are unable to live with their families. Court work is of a consistently high standard. Children are supported to return home when this is in their best interests and exceptional effort is made to support children to remain in their wider families, including placing children abroad.</p> <p>The local authority is a highly ambitious corporate parent. A co-located child and adolescent mental health service and a proactive virtual school all work to support each individual child. As a result, children and young people do well in education, placement stability is good and children feel safe.</p> <p>Members of the children in care council have regular, positive contact with senior managers, whom they know well. Elected members and strategic leaders give high priority to children in their care. The corporate parenting board provides strong leadership and champions the needs of all children. A vibrant culture of celebrating successes and achievements of young people is embedded and there is an active and influential children and young people’s panel.</p> <p>Adoption services are outstanding. They are extremely well managed, with adoption considered for a diverse group of children, including older children, brothers and sisters, and children from a wide range of cultural backgrounds, with consistently outstanding work. Adoption support is very strong, with innovative services in place to support adopters.</p> <p>Care leavers receive a good service overall and have a high profile in Westminster. The local authority is aware that greater focus needs to be given to young care leavers in custody.</p>	

30. Westminster has a strong tradition and culture of enabling children to remain with their families, if it is safe for them to do so. The number of children looked after in Westminster has remained stable. Senior managers routinely monitor and analyse any trends to ensure that they understand the changing needs of vulnerable children in their community.
31. When children become looked after, decision making is timely and there is a culture of urgency, ensuring that children have permanent and stable homes if they cannot live with their families. Assessments are of a high quality, with many being outstanding. They are timely, comprehensive and analytical, and lead to appropriately focused help that is well informed by historical events. Clear, up-to-date chronologies demonstrate outstanding practice, helping children to understand why they are in care. Prompt action is taken to safeguard children. Risk is understood and responded to well. Assessments for children pre-birth are strong, and timely action results in robust plans.
32. The tri-borough partnership's senior leaders are highly ambitious, outward looking and pioneering in developing innovative, effective, preventative approaches to reduce the number of children coming into care. For example, the Action for Change project supports 45 women who have previously had a number of children removed by the courts. To date, only one child has since been born and has remained with its mother. Women are effectively supported to come to terms with previous traumas.
33. Of the 167 children and young people looked after at the time of the inspection, 26% were under the age of 10 and 32% were over 16, and there were 31 unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people. Staff are trained to meet this changing profile, working effectively across cultures on human rights and age assessments.
34. Care proceedings are only initiated when it is in the child's best interests. Strong management oversight at a tri-borough and local level by the executive director of children's services ensures that pre-proceedings work is of a very high standard. Pre-proceedings letters are clear, succinct, well-evidenced and use straightforward language.
35. Cafcass reports that the tri-borough partnership is 'leading the way' and the view of the judiciary is that the tri-borough arrangements 'stand out as leading good practice' across London. Performance in Westminster for the third quarter of 2015–16 was 29 weeks for care proceedings, which is slightly above the expected timescale of 26 weeks. The local authority has a coherent, well-analysed understanding of timeliness for each case, including where this has been impacted upon by its participation in the innovative family drug and alcohol court.
36. Parallel planning is rigorously and systematically applied. Family group conferences (FGCs) are used early to inform care planning and to identify extended family members. Exceptional effort and expertise are employed to

ensure that children have the opportunity to live within their families. This includes examples of outstanding practice in placing children abroad. The local authority minimises the additional time this might take by ensuring that foster-to-adopt placements are available for these children.

37. Children who return home following a safe assessment are fully supported. The Going Home project is undertaking innovative tri-borough research with 10 young people looked after in Westminster, enabling them to remain at home safely with their families.
38. Children and young people are visited often and seen alone, with 96% of visits within expected timescales. Case recording is clear and up to date, and the voice of the child is consistently evidenced. Direct work and engagement with children and young people are a particular strength. Effective direct work was seen, with social workers being persistent in developing relationships with 'harder to engage' or resistant young people. All young people who spoke to inspectors had had consistent social worker relationships. Some young people had had the same social worker for more than five years, or up to 11 years. Significant effort is made to engage with challenging or avoidant families, including good use of a wider network of professionals to support parents.
39. Robust monitoring and understanding of children going missing and child sexual exploitation are driven assertively and confidently by a missing children coordinator and the MASE panel. Considerable work has been undertaken to ensure that children looked after who go missing are safe and their experiences understood. An audit of 40 missing children in July 2015 identified the need to work further on routine take-up of 'return' interviews. This is improving, evidenced by cases tracked and sampled, and data on the reduction of missing episodes. Professionals have a good understanding of the push and pull factors for individual children going missing, and recent training has enhanced ways to work with young people to keep them safe.
40. The health needs of young people are met well through a dedicated looked after children nurse, and the quality of health assessments is strong. About 70% of initial health assessments and 98% of annual health assessments take place on time. Three quarters of young people have had a dental check in-year, so far. Young people who spoke to inspectors were aware of the role of the nurse, including being given information on drug and alcohol services and sexual health.
41. Child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) involvement is responsive and timely. There is no waiting list and contact is usually within two weeks, but will be immediate if the risk is high. Clinical expertise and advice are embedded throughout the service through regular consultations with frontline managers and by CAMHS representation on both the transitions and the adoption panels. Cases seen by inspectors showed the positive impact of this service, including direct work with carers supporting brothers and sisters to live together.

42. Most children looked after achieve well educationally and make good progress from their starting points. The virtual headteacher and team have good oversight of the attendance, progress and achievement of children looked after. They have a thorough understanding of the individual needs and circumstances of all children. Staff maintain a comprehensive database and act swiftly when children, including those who live outside of the area, begin to experience problems with their education. Staff effectively target their support towards those children who are most at risk of not achieving, and intervene effectively.
43. Children told inspectors that they enjoy their education and spoke highly of the support they receive at school. Most attend a school that has been judged good or better. In 2014/15, all children at Key Stage 1 achieved well in reading and mathematics, and made the progress expected of all children. There is a strong track record of children looked after achieving well by the time they reach 11 years old. In 2014/15, all children at Key Stage 2 achieved age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. At Key Stage 4, approximately one third of children achieved five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, which is higher than children looked after in similar areas.
44. The achievement gap is narrowing well between children looked after and their peers. In 2014/15, children looked after at Key Stage 2 achieved better than their peers. At Key Stage 4, local data for 2014/15 show that while the achievement gap remained wide, with a 25% gap between children looked after and their peers achieving five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, it had narrowed by approximately 10%.
45. Specialist personal advisers provide effective support for young people's participation in post-16 education. They maintain good contact with young people who have become disengaged with education, employment or training (EET). Personal advisers know young people well and carefully plan their next steps in EET. As a result, most young people remain in EET in Years 12 and 13.
46. Timely intervention helps avoid unnecessary exclusions and disruptions to children's education. Staff advocate effectively on behalf of children and put in place sound strategies to ensure that children stay in school. As a result, there have been no permanent exclusions of children looked after for many years, and the use of fixed-term exclusions is being reduced well. Where children are awaiting a school place, individual tuition is quickly put in place.
47. Staff receive early alerts when children's attendance drops, and intervene quickly and effectively. As a result, overall school attendance of children looked after is good, and has been so for the last three academic years. The percentage of sessions missed by children looked after is reducing and is lower than those in similar areas. Unauthorised absence is being reduced well. Few children and young people report incidents of bullying, and most would turn to a trusted adult in the network should they be bullied or become concerned about their safety.

48. The vast majority of children looked after have an up-to-date personal education plan (PEP). Professionals, including social workers, designated teachers and the virtual school share information well to review the progress that children are making and put in place additional support where it is needed. Most children looked after report that they find their PEP reviews useful. In a very small number of cases sampled, PEPs varied in quality.
49. Inspectors found many examples where the pupil premium is being used effectively to support children and young people's progress. For example, funding is used well to provide additional tuition for children, laptops to assist with research and homework, and revision aids. However, in a minority of cases it was not sufficiently clear how the pupil premium was being used to support the specific individual needs of children.
50. Children looked after are encouraged to pursue a range of inspirational social and recreational activities. Recent examples include: visits to the Victoria and Albert museum; a bike project; and a digital innovation and arts project. Social workers accompany children to London universities, health fun days, trips to the seaside and on a residential trip specifically for children under the age of 11. Children told inspectors that senior leaders will intervene to ensure that they have specific experiences, for example opportunities to shadow a midwife or work experience in a barrister's chambers. The Looked After Children Achievement Awards are held each October and older care leavers, established and settled in their lives, return to talk about their experiences. Delegated authority is in place for foster carers to take day-to-day decisions, so that children and young people can participate in the activities they enjoy.
51. Long-term and short-term placement stability is very strong, with only 7% of children looked after at November 2015 having had more than three moves in the previous 12 months. Long-term placement stability in 2014–15 was 77% and for 2015–16 so far is at 79%, so it remains strong. A consultation on placement stability in September 2015 showed that eight of 11 young people in foster care felt a sense of stability and security. Five of these young people had lived with the same carer for more than five years. About 23% of children are placed outside Greater London in order to meet their specific needs. The local authority actively audits the experience of these children to ensure that they are receiving the best service.
52. Independent reviewing officers (IROs) have manageable caseloads (averaging 42), enabling them to drive permanency planning vigorously. They routinely attend permanency planning meetings and are committed, knowledgeable and passionate about their work. They know the young people well. Five formal challenges in the last six months were quickly addressed and did not progress any further, and most issues are addressed informally. Almost all reviews are on time, and care plans are clear and comprehensive. IROs ensure that the review meeting remains meaningful for settled young people by offering a more informal individualised experience and enabling young people to chair or co-chair their review. About 97% of young people participate in their reviews.

IROs in Westminster benefit from regular meetings with tri-borough colleagues, including externally facilitated training and case discussion.

53. Children and young people are specifically matched with long-term carers. About 77% live in foster care and 96% are placed in settings judged good or better by Ofsted. Brothers and sisters are placed together when this is in their interests. One case seen ensured that three children from one family were provided with additional support to live together, to allow a thorough assessment of their future needs.
54. The tri-borough partnership's fostering service has in-house placement choice, with wider flexibility to use staff, resources and carers. An ambitious and proactive fostering recruitment programme to recruit 25 new carers commenced in October 2015, with external support to fill the recognised gaps in placement choice for young people. The 16% net deficit for foster carers has arisen from positive reasons including retirement, offering permanent placements or 'staying put' arrangements. The recruitment and assessment of prospective foster carers are strong. The quality of assessments is good. They are thorough and sensitive, focusing on strengths and areas for development. A well-organised and separate tri-borough connected persons' team responds in a timely and thorough way to all connected persons and special guardianship assessments. There are currently 18 special guardianship orders (SGOs) underway.
55. Good support and training offered to foster carers result in strong retention. Respite care in fostering is only used to support placement stability. All carers spoke very highly about their supervising social workers. Annual reviews are regular and independently undertaken by dedicated fostering IROs, managed within a separate service. Creative use is made of all foster carers, for example supporting children who return home to parents or acting as a mentor for young people involved in drug and gang activity.
56. Permanence planning is tightly managed and overseen effectively through tri-borough and local management. Senior managers know and check on the progress of individual children through tracking systems and routine monitoring meetings. The small number of children with a plan for adoption is proportionate to the looked after population, and reflects the right plan being sought for children in a timely way. Children with a plan for adoption include older children, brothers and sisters, children with complex needs and children from a diverse range of cultures. Children's permanency needs are informed by high-quality 'together or apart' assessments and child permanence reports. These are consistently well analysed and well evidenced. Contact is appropriately considered.
57. Consultation and participation with children looked after is outstanding. A dedicated participation worker drives this work, but it is viewed as everyone's responsibility and embedded throughout the service. This is evidenced through direct input and active involvement of social workers, the virtual school, IROs

and senior managers, including the director of family services and the tri-borough assistant director for looked after children and care leavers. The children in care council, known as the children and young people's panel (CYPP), is lively, reflective, committed and proactive. Its role is valued and it is keen to represent all young people looked after. Alongside the participation worker, members of the CYPP present findings from consultations to the corporate parenting board. Children and young people are members of recruitment panels for social workers and senior staff. They are trainers on fostering skills courses for prospective carers, advising on the personal qualities required to be a foster carer. They have redesigned the statutory review document, which is now child-friendly.

58. Formal complaints from children looked after are low, and a tri-borough complaints service ensures that it resolves any concerns at an early stage. Pro-active involvement of the children's rights officer ensures that the majority of representations made by children looked after and care leavers are responded to effectively. They rarely need to be considered in the formal complaints process. For example, care leavers raised concerns about the impact of changes in housing benefits on housing options. This resulted in workshops facilitated by the housing officer and individual welfare rights sessions, for young people directly affected. The young people were supported in developing a leaflet to enable all care leavers to have access to appropriate help and support.
59. Consistently strong efforts are made to ensure that children's cultures and religious and belief systems are understood, and inform care planning. Examples were seen of outstanding social work practice that included sensitive, direct work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people, using an interpreter to understand the young person's experiences, and culturally matched family group conferences that enabled children to live in their birth families.

The graded judgement for adoption performance is that it is outstanding
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60. Securing permanence through adoption is a high priority in Westminster. Adoption services are managed effectively within a single, overarching, tri-borough service. Sharing strategic functions results in economies of scale in relation to resources, and an environment where creativity and innovation thrive, demonstrating consistently high-quality professional practice. Consequently, children benefit from an outstanding service.
61. Adoption is considered for all children and there is a comprehensive understanding of clear permanence planning, ensuring that the best permanence option is considered for children at the earliest stage. This way of working is threaded through the tri-borough partnership's understanding of permanence and adoption practice, and is given the highest priority. This is

shown, for example, in the work of the permanency project, which is chaired by the tri-borough executive director and ensures that pro-active work with the courts is completed, to secure agreement for family-finding, prior to the placement order.

62. Adoption managers demonstrate a clear, well-analysed and sophisticated understanding of adoption practice and of the wider adoption market. They routinely reflect and measure their own performance against national indicators and other London boroughs. There is a range of comprehensive tracking and monitoring systems for adoption performance, including detailed analysis of any issues affecting timeliness and to assist with understanding the needs of individual children.
63. Arrangements to monitor the progress of children who are subject to an adoption plan are robust. Staff, including senior managers, have a detailed knowledge of all children, what is happening for them and why. The progress made by individual children waiting for adoption is closely monitored and placement options are continuously explored.
64. The adoption reform grant has been used effectively to drive improvements and create extra posts. For example, the move to appoint to the pivotal gateway role of a permanency coordinator is highly insightful, and regular permanence planning meeting minutes demonstrate exceptional practice in the rigour and thought put into highly effective planning.
65. In the year 2014–15, 15 children were adopted, and within the past 12 months, nine children were adopted. At the time of the inspection, the local authority had nine children who were awaiting a match, and six children matched to adopters but awaiting a final order. Adoption practice reflects the authority's commitment to early family-finding, to securing adoption for children placed with their brothers and sisters and for children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.
66. Performance against the adoption scorecard for 2011–14 is strong. Children in Westminster waited an average of 512 days between entering care and moving in with an adoptive family, well within the national threshold of 547 days.
67. The scorecard for 2011–14 shows that children in Westminster waited an average of 196 days between receiving court authority to place and an adoptive match being decided. This is outside the national threshold of 152 days. However, inspectors identified reasonable delay due to the complexity of the careful work required in matching children with families who can meet their needs.
68. The service is successful in recruiting adopters, with 46 adopters awaiting a match, including 18 approved in the current year. The tri-borough partnership ensures that adopters are available for inter-agency placements and routinely

uses the adoption register and other national matching forums for both children and adopters waiting for a match.

69. Assessments of prospective adopters are thorough and of a very high standard. The service is actively working to improve timeliness for adopter assessments. Delays are mostly outside the service's control. The impact of this has been minimal on adopters and children. Adopters spoken to were very positive about the recruitment and assessment process.
70. The tri-borough partnership has a clear foster-to-adopt policy that guides social work practice, resulting in early permanence placements being made. Both foster-to-adopt and concurrent arrangements are discussed with every adopter and the first concurrent adopter has recently been recruited. Some adopter assessments have been fast-tracked to prevent delay, including where a specific foster-to-adopt match is a possibility and for second-time adopters.
71. Managers of the service are reflective and thoughtful, and continue to consider how the service could be improved. This includes working with an external agency to increase recruitment, enhancing the capacity of adopters to meet children's needs and to support, train and equip adopters to feel confident. Thirteen mentors have been recruited to support adopters through the recruitment process from the outset, and adopters spoke of the value they place on the mentor support offered.
72. Forty adopters have undertaken therapeutic parenting training and have reported feeling more confident as a result. Innovative workshops have included adopters working with a psychologist to increase openness in matching, particularly in relation to mental health.
73. The tri-borough fostering and adoption panel is well chaired by two chairs who bring a range of adoption and safeguarding experience. There are clear quality assurance processes, and adopters spoken to confirmed that the process was rigorous.
74. Prospective adopter reports and child permanence reports are consistently strong, with appropriate detail and a good level of analysis. The panel process and the decision-making process are highly effective, with all panel minutes and agency decision-maker decisions being thorough and well considered.
75. Managers routinely analyse any issues that impact on performance and make adjustments as required. For example, managers noticed a slower application for adoption orders in inter-agency placements when the adoption family-finding worker had withdrawn. To remedy this, the service now ensures that the family-finder remains involved until the applications have been submitted for these children.
76. Adoption support is exceptionally strong, with an impressive and effective range of provision. Adopters are aware of their entitlement to adoption support. They spoke positively about support offered, and adoption support plans were

consistently good. This was supported by the view of the independent chair. Good use is made of the adoption support fund for individual children.

77. Children are extremely well supported to prepare them to live with their future families. Life story work is of a high quality. It is clear, colourful and jargon-free. Social workers are skilled in undertaking direct work with children, helping them to understand their histories and enabling them to establish attachment to their new family. This allows children to settle quickly, with very low adoption disruptions. There have been two disruptions in the past two years. Where disruptions have occurred, effective and timely disruption meetings have taken place, and learning has been embedded in organisational practice and planning for individual children.
78. Provision for birth parents is through an independent commissioned service. The provision offered is comprehensive and includes birth parent counselling, support and advice, including literacy help with 'letterbox' contact. The service also facilitates information sharing between an adopted child, their birth family and the adoptive family. Currently, the service facilitates 'letterbox' contact for 89 Westminster children and supervises direct contact with their birth family for three adopted children.

The graded judgement for the experiences and progress of care leavers is that it is good

79. Staff in the leaving care service are skilled in building strong relationships with care leavers. Personal advisers know young people well and have a good understanding of their individual needs and circumstances. They maintain regular and effective contact and offer good practical support, such as accompanying them to health appointments and to college interviews. Young people benefit from working with a supportive, flexible and experienced team. Clinicians are available to assist in complex cases, effectively reducing risk.
80. Care leavers aged 18 or over, and especially those with additional vulnerabilities, who go missing or are at risk of sexual and gang exploitation, are effectively monitored by senior managers. They are included in a risk log of cases discussed routinely by the tri-borough assistant director for looked after children and the Westminster director of family services.
81. Specialist personal advisers work consistently to support young people's career and vocational aspirations. They provide effective challenge and guidance to young people on their career options and next steps in education, employment or training (EET). As a result, a good and increasing proportion of care leavers are in EET. Some care leavers report that they would like more help in finding part-time work, work experience and work placements. Plans are well-advanced to broaden work experience opportunities and vocational mentoring for young people leaving care.

82. The local authority has high aspirations for care leavers. These are reflected in the excellent work undertaken by the virtual school, personal advisers and social workers in promoting university as an option for young people. There are currently 20 young people at university. They benefit from good financial support to attend. In a minority of cases, the accommodation needs of care leavers during holiday periods are not considered in a timely fashion and this leads to a small number of young people feeling anxious about where and with whom they will stay.
83. In general, the local authority has closely considered the accommodation needs of care leavers and options for them. There is a good range of accommodation available to young people and a good proportion of care leavers live in suitable accommodation. Managers from the leaving care service and housing department have worked successfully together to increase and broaden the range of housing options available to young people, such as affordable private rented accommodation.
84. In most cases sampled by inspectors, the accommodation needs of young people are being met effectively. The different levels of support needed by young people are well understood. As a result, care leavers are in accommodation where they are well supported. Young people who spoke to inspectors said that they felt safe where they lived. The service works collaboratively with housing, health and adult social care, improving transition arrangements. Those young people with additional needs are supported well by the complex needs panel.
85. Bed and breakfast accommodation is rarely used, and never for young people under 18 years old. In each of the three cases in the last year where young people aged over 18 were placed briefly in bed and breakfast accommodation, managers carefully assessed the risks involved and staff provided good oversight of young people's welfare.
86. The local authority is responding effectively to the increasing number of unaccompanied asylum seekers who become care leavers. They are helped to settle quickly into accommodation and receive good support for their health and education needs.
87. Local authority staff and partners provide good support to help care leavers build their skills to live independently, such as learning to save money, budget and cook for themselves. Housing providers deliver short courses that build young people's skills and knowledge so that they can live independently. Most young people living independently successfully maintain their tenancies.
88. A weekly group at the leaving care service develops young people's practical skills well, including cooking, and provides good opportunities for their personal and social development through discussions on, for example, sexual health and personal safety. Young people have good opportunities to mix with others, make friends and extend their support network.

89. Pathway plans are mostly up to date, detailed and reflect the good current knowledge that personal advisers and managers have of young people's circumstances. However, in a minority of cases, pathway plans are not timely and do not reflect young people's current needs. In these cases, planning is not as effective and outcomes for a small number of young people are not improving.
90. Managers and staff ensure that there is highly effective participation of care leavers in developing and improving services. Young people are routinely involved in staff recruitment, in the training of foster carers and in promoting the rights and entitlements of their peers.
91. Young people receive good financial support to achieve their goals. The local authority provides good financial support for those attending university through an annual 'parental contribution'. Top-up funding for young people on apprenticeships is available, and young people are entitled to £2,000 to set up their first home. For those young people in further education, additional tuition is provided where necessary.
92. A CAMHS team for children looked after is co-located in the leaving care service, providing direct intervention and emotional support. Young people know their health history and are well placed to manage their own health. All young people have a final health assessment, receive information on any outstanding health needs and have an up-to-date copy of their health care plan, including a summary of their health history. They are given information about who to contact should they have concerns about their health and can contact the nurse for children looked after should they wish to. In most cases sampled, care leavers are well supported in accessing health services, including keeping GP appointments and accessing specialist health services.
93. Managers and personal advisers have not maintained regular enough oversight and contact with all care leavers who are in custody. This means that not enough has been known about all of the young people's current circumstances, welfare or progress. As a result of the inspection, managers have undertaken a thorough review of all custody cases and the needs of these young people are now being prioritised (Recommendation).

Leadership, management and governance	Outstanding
<p>Summary</p> <p>Stable and highly effective operational and political leadership ensures that children and families in Westminster benefit from good or outstanding services. Senior leaders and elected members have high aspirations for children. They demonstrate care and compassion, and a rigorous approach to achieving excellence at all levels. They have a comprehensive knowledge of the strengths and areas for improvement and are quickly responsive to external challenge.</p> <p>Underpinning their work is an imaginative approach, enhanced by the exemplary tri-borough partnership, to service provision and problem solving. Robust collaborative arrangements help services to meet local need effectively. The tri-borough director of children’s services is a pivotal figure and manages this complex set of arrangements exceptionally well. Consequently, the local authority has demonstrated significant continuous improvement in quality of services since the last inspection in 2011.</p> <p>The director of family services is highly visible and an effective leader. As a result, the quality of social work practice is consistently good or outstanding. Managers are not complacent. Instead, systematic learning from direct observations enables senior managers to quickly identify and resolve any practice concerns, ensuring that services are continually improving and are highly effective. A strong and embedded child-focused culture ensures that children and young people are listened to and are influential in informing service delivery. Vulnerable children and families benefit from exceptional, well-targeted early help and specialist services, commissioned specifically to reflect the complex diversity of the local population.</p> <p>A comprehensive performance management system is a core element of success. Professional accountability and rigorous management oversight enable senior leaders to be extremely knowledgeable about the impact of services provided.</p> <p>Strong partnership arrangements and robust multi-agency working ensure that work with gangs is integrated and that work with children at risk of child sexual exploitation is well coordinated and highly effective. An effective and accountable Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) ensures that partners work well together to safeguard children and young people.</p> <p>Services for children looked after or those requiring adoption are outstanding. Corporate parenting is well established across the council.</p> <p>The commitment to implementing the ‘focus on practice’ innovation project is attracting high-calibre workers who are delivering outstanding social work practice, improving the lives of vulnerable children and families in the borough.</p>	

94. Exceptional tri-borough management arrangements, led by the executive director for children's services (DCS), are exemplified by the well-managed 'focus on practice' initiative. Funded as part of the government's innovation programme, this highly innovative project enhances social work intervention by adopting a well thought through and well-resourced model of practice. Innovative elements include a comprehensive and accredited training programme, and skills coaching from trained specialist practitioners. The model has been widely disseminated, and is clearly fully accepted and implemented across the workforce. The role of principal social worker, fully integrated into the 'focus on practice' approach, is effectively enhancing improved direct work with families in Westminster and was widely in evidence to inspectors during case observation and case tracking.
95. Very solid governance arrangements are firmly in place, and these ensure that the senior leadership team of the tri-borough partnership communicates regularly and effectively. A formal cycle of meetings between the DCS, the LSCB chair, senior leaders such as the three borough chief executives and elected members makes sure that they are very well informed on matters for which they hold strategic responsibility. Senior leaders operate within a culture of respectful challenge and they hold each other to account. The senior management team, including the DCS, is highly interactive with frontline services. Senior managers know individual children and social workers very well. Highly effective lines of communication from frontline social workers to senior leaders enable them to know their services to children thoroughly and extensively.
96. The Westminster director of family services has an accurate view of the service she leads and shows exceptionally strong leadership and commitment to continued improvement, working diligently to progress the small number of areas for improvement that remain. There is no complacency. Instead, a strong culture of continuous learning, professional accountability and responsibility, devoid of blame, enables staff to flourish in a safe but challenging environment.
97. The lead member in Westminster annually identifies 'city for all' key performance areas identified for improvement. An accessible monthly update report on progress is presented at each scrutiny committee and is subject to rigorous challenge and debate. The cabinet member for children chairs a six-weekly 'hotspots' meeting to ensure thorough examination and awareness of high-risk cases. The chief executive is accessible to all staff through his regular 'meet the chief' days, and young people know who the senior managers are. The lead member undertakes regular visits to meet service users. A meeting with foster carers, to understand their role better and to encourage applicants, led to implementing a total rebate of council tax to foster carers and a significant increase in initial enquiries locally.
98. An active and pro-active well-established corporate parenting panel ensures that priorities for the local authority are closely aligned to the 'children in care and care leavers strategy'. The inclusion of an opposition-elected member,

initiated by the lead member, has improved the challenge and scrutiny of the panel and strengthened corporate parenting across the council. There is clear evidence of impact in Westminster, demonstrated through the work of the virtual school in improving educational outcomes for children looked after and of the council's housing commissioner in increased housing options for care leavers.

99. A comprehensive learning and improvement framework sets out clear expectations, and ensures that thorough oversight by senior managers drives improvements in practice. The 'learning and improvement framework' quarterly report is highly effective in collating findings from serious case reviews, user feedback (including from young people, parents and carers), complaints and compliments, monthly audits and practice weeks. Highly rigorous performance management means that senior leaders in the tri-borough partnership are very aware of the comparative performance of the services that they provide to children. A comprehensive suite of concise and consistent performance reports means that managers and leaders are knowledgeable and well informed about their service's performance against key indicators, and this enables them to understand it very well. Detailed scrutiny and correction of any performance deficits supports the delivery of social work of a very high quality, and means that an ever-greater number of children receive a high-quality service.
100. Data analysts in the borough work closely with social workers, enabling them to contribute fully to performance scrutiny and improvement. Team-level data provide opportunity for healthy performance comparison, and monthly management discussions improve consistency of practice and outcomes across teams. Dips in performance, quickly identified, are addressed appropriately at team and individual level.
101. Robust analysis of data leads to innovative and creative solutions. As a result of very low numbers of referrals concerning female genital mutilation in Westminster, a successful DfE innovation fund pilot project, established at St Mary's Hospital, created referral pathways between health, maternity and children's services to assess risk, support victims and communities, and ensure effective monitoring and information sharing at all points of a girl's life. This outstanding, sensitive and culturally creative practice has led to increased confidence in the women and, in 18 months, 42 have received appropriate help and support.
102. Very strong oversight by managers of practice means that they are fully assured that it is of a consistently high quality. Scrutiny of case records by inspectors indicates that management supervision is frequent, regular and evident on the child's file. Records generally evidence a very firm focus on the child. This child-centred approach is strongly supported by the work of innovation-funded advanced and specialist practitioners, and clinicians. All of these highly skilled and well-trained professionals are embedded within the social work teams as part of 'focus on practice', and they add significant value by ensuring that managers do not have to buy in specialist services at

considerable additional expense. Social workers have regular opportunities in reflective group supervision to discuss cases, identify areas for practice improvement and share learning.

103. Performance management is significantly enhanced by the use of highly innovative and regular 'practice weeks', which include extensive case audits and practice observations undertaken by senior managers. Full participation by a range of services provides invaluable insight into the actual quality of practice. An extensive overview is delivered on the impact of social work intervention on children's lives. Inquisitive and detailed analysis of the key findings leads to tangible recommendations to support continuously improving performance. Detailed feedback is provided immediately to social workers. Young people and family members are able to comment on their experiences, and the effectiveness of the help and support they have been offered. Areas for improvement are quickly identified and change is swiftly and positively effected.
104. The development of high-quality chronologies, effectively informing assessments and analysis of risk, is an example of tangible improvement in practice, as a result. Work with fathers and wider family members has improved as a direct result of learning from serious case reviews and directly observed practice.
105. Excellent workforce planning means that the tri-borough partnership has a very stable and experienced workforce. This enhances the consistency and quality of service. Using high-quality performance reports, senior managers are helped to understand the workforce fully and to ensure that practice standards are rigorously maintained. They describe a 'virtuous circle' in which quality candidates or students aspire to work in the tri-borough partnership. The offer of protected, and then very low, caseloads, and career development through training and promotion opportunities, attracts, then retains, high-calibre social workers. The skilled and well-trained staff group is able to deliver the highly innovative and aspirational 'focus on practice' outcomes.
106. Experienced social workers are enabled to continue in practice and to develop and promote their own and others' social work skills without going into management, through becoming advanced or specialist practitioners, or qualified family therapists. Children benefit directly from the wide range of social work knowledge and expertise that is available to support the help that they receive.
107. Social workers in the borough told inspectors that 'high-quality practice is possible due to manageable caseloads, accessible resources to support families, and excellent supervision'. The local authority values its workforce and acts creatively to support it, providing career development and training opportunities to attract and retain high-calibre workers. Secondment and internal acting-up opportunities retain social workers with local knowledge, and commitment to Frontline and 'Step up to social work' enables workers to move into specialist practitioner or management posts, creating a stable and loyal workforce.

108. A dedicated and talented specialist team operates to a well-established and highly coherent model of commissioning, including joint commissioning. Significant additional resources have been drawn down to support services in a very wide variety of ways, using collaborative commissioning techniques. The demographics of the tri-borough partnership means that commissioners can draw on trust funds, philanthropic giving and social enterprises to a greater extent than in other areas. Tri-borough commissioners are therefore exceptionally skilled at brokering additional resources and using these to add considerable value to existing services. Tri-borough commissioners are also highly active in shaping resources to meet identified need. They have very efficiently decommissioned and recommissioned some services, such as semi-independent living for care leavers.
109. Westminster provides an extensive range of high-quality provision to support children and families that is responsive, accessible and accessed quickly. Targeted services, focused on identified need, are effective in enabling early support to families. Services tailored and commissioned to reflect the complex diversity of the local population are available to families, and social workers are pro-active in securing timely access.
110. Significant progress has been made in addressing child sexual exploitation, with effective tri-borough multi-agency collaboration, ensuring swift information sharing and identification of children and young people at risk. Extensive work has been undertaken to understand the profile of children at risk across the tri-borough partnership. Senior managers regularly evaluate interventions with higher-risk young people at multi-agency sexual exploitation panel (MASE) meetings. This highly effective multi-agency approach maps, tracks and intervenes, thereby reducing risks. Inspectors observed exceptional multi-agency analytical work using technology to identify and disrupt dangerous perpetrators, linked to vulnerable children at risk of child sexual exploitation.
111. Systematic information- and intelligence-sharing ensures there is a strategic focus on emerging or increasing risks. These are identified early through an innovative multi-agency integrated gangs unit (IGU) that meets weekly, tracking and intervening quickly with new gang affiliates. A dedicated gangs unit young women's worker engages with young women at risk of sexual exploitation, and other forms of abuse and control, through their gang associations.
112. Robust monitoring and understanding of missing children and child sexual exploitation is driven assertively, systematically and confidently by a tri-borough missing children coordinator and the MASE panel. Considerable work has been undertaken to ensure that children looked after who go missing are safe and their experiences understood. Senior managers evaluate responses to children missing. Each week, risks are monitored effectively and issues are escalated if necessary. The tri-borough strategic panel has recognised that further work is required to aggregate patterns and trends, and has effective plans to progress this work.

113. A strong emphasis on resolving dissatisfaction at an early stage means formal complaints are relatively low in number across the tri-borough partnership. Social workers, activity officers and participation workers build meaningful relationships with children and families, and work hard to resolve any dissatisfaction at an early stage before it escalates into a more formal investigation. Robust advocacy arrangements ensure that children and young people are well supported and helped to articulate their complaint. Complaints literature for children and young people has been reviewed and refreshed to ensure that the complaints process is better promoted and more easily understood. Thorough analysis of complaints and compliments effectively informs the learning and improvement framework, in recognition that learning from complaints is an important element of service development. Individual annual complaints reports for each borough appropriately reflect differing learning outcomes across the tri-borough partnership. Detailed training is successfully delivered to all managers and staff on effective handling of complaints. Children and young people are regularly consulted on six themes linked to the strategy for children looked after, so that they can inform service improvement and delivery.
114. Pro-active involvement of a children's rights specialist ensures that the majority of representations made by children and young people are responded to effectively and rarely need to be considered in the formal complaints process. Care leavers in Westminster, raising the issue of changes in housing benefits affecting accommodation options, resulted in workshops facilitated by the housing officer and individual welfare right sessions with young people directly affected. The young people developed a leaflet to enable care leavers across the tri-borough partnership to have access to appropriate help and support.
115. The consistently high quality of pre-proceedings work across the tri-borough partnership means that social workers attend court having undertaken all necessary assessments to support robust and well-resourced care packages. Rigorous placement finding is very well-supported by a comprehensive sufficiency strategy, with clear links to the joint strategic needs assessment prepared by public health. Evidence to support care plans is consistently robust and includes appropriate and thorough consideration of family members. This significantly minimises delay in children looked after achieving the best possible plan for permanence. Positive relationships with Cafcass enable meaningful dialogue and challenge where differences arise and, as a result, all issues identified are effectively and quickly resolved. Joint quarterly reviews by senior managers of cases of children looked after in proceedings give them the opportunity for challenge and learning to improve services to children looked after.
116. Statements and care plans presented in court are of a very high quality and support robust, well-considered decisions when children are in care proceedings. Social workers present their cases confidently and their evidence is clear and balanced. Timeliness of care proceedings is improving overall and, where it falls outside of 26-week timescales, in the main this is due to complex

cases and special guardianship orders. Judges report that tri-borough arrangements 'stand out as leading good practice' across London. The tri-borough legal team is described as 'exceptional' and demonstrates a wide range of experience and knowledge that stand up to challenge and support robust recommendations to court. This secures the legal position of children looked after.

117. The tri-borough and bi-borough 'Prevent' steering group and Channel panels are appropriately constituted. Relationships are mature, resulting in effective coordination, intelligence-sharing and work to raise awareness and prevent radicalisation. Quarterly meetings effectively retain oversight of the delivery of the 'Prevent' agenda across the three boroughs. Established links to the LSCB ensure that safeguarding children is prioritised, for example in direct work with parents' groups, effective work in schools as part of the curriculum and sensitive engagement with faith communities. The interface between the 'Prevent' team and children's services is strongly collaborative. Any young person referred to 'Prevent' is passed to the access and assessment teams and, similarly, referrals to 'Prevent' are regularly made by a range of teams in children's services and also schools. The Channel process represents an area of strength in mutual collaboration between children's services, schools and the 'Prevent' team, ensuring a safeguarding-focused and proportionate response to any referral. Proactive collaboration results in early detection and prevention.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

The Local Safeguarding Children Board is good

Executive summary

Overall, amalgamation under a single LSCB creates significant benefits for young people and for all partner agencies. These include: rationalisation of time; the secure involvement of senior representatives from partner agencies, many of which span several boroughs; pooling resources to tackle issues in common; and alignment with tri-borough children's services. The tri-borough partnership achieves the right balance between shared and local functions, and this ensures that children are effectively safeguarded.

Robust links are in place between the LSCB and other statutory bodies. This allows the board to make sure that children's safeguarding stays high on everyone's agenda.

Extensive engagement by partner agencies has been secured and the work of the board is therefore well-resourced through partners' financial contributions. The board's business support team would benefit from a work plan to sit alongside its business plan and drive through the priorities for children.

Through systematic analysis of audits under section 11 of the Children Act 2004, the LSCB has assured itself that safeguarding is a priority for all partner agencies. The board's quality assurance sub-group effectively monitors multi-agency safeguarding performance across the tri-borough partnership. Detailed analysis of data is routinely undertaken by the sub-group and reported to the board by exception, although the board would benefit from a review of this process to assure itself of its effectiveness. Actions arising from reviewing data lie with individual partner agencies, and no system is in place to monitor whether actions identified are carried through.

Rigorous multi-agency themed audits have been systematically undertaken by the board. These audits provide appropriate recommendations for change, but further checks have not taken place to establish whether practice has actually changed or improved.

Effective monitoring by the child sexual exploitation and missing sub-group enables the board to have a robust understanding of missing children and their behaviour across the tri-borough partnership.

An established case review sub-committee ensures that lessons learnt from reviews are disseminated promptly across the tri-borough partnership. The sub-committee has clear action plans in place for each individual case review, but does not have an overall action plan to cover their ongoing work.

A clear and detailed learning and improvement framework incorporates the learning

from serious case reviews, themed audits and performance monitoring by the board. The learning and development sub-group of the LSCB undertakes its role across the tri-borough partnership and ensures that sufficient safeguarding training is provided across all partner agencies. However, no formal analysis of the impact of training takes place either across the tri-borough partnership or at borough level.

A wide range of activities to tackle the board's priorities and any lessons from serious case reviews are appropriately included in the LSCB annual report. An attendance log shows that some members have infrequent attendance, but no challenge is evident. A comprehensive safeguarding plan covers all of the board's priorities.

Recommendations

- 118. Review the extensive dataset to ensure that it is aligned to the board's priorities.
- 119. Devise a system for ensuring that actions arising from data scrutiny are carried out in the individual boroughs.
- 120. Ensure that recommendations from multi-agency themed audits are carried out, and analyse their impact on improving practice.
- 121. Develop an overarching SCR action plan to track the progress of work arising from individual case reviews.
- 122. Devise a system to escalate concerns about infrequent partnership attendance at the board.

Inspection findings – the Local Safeguarding Children Board

- 123. LSCB arrangements are effectively shared, and almost all of the statutory functions of the LSCB and its sub-groups are delivered across the tri-borough partnership. Each borough appropriately maintains a local LSCB partnership group, and this ensures that local safeguarding issues are suitably considered and reported on to the LSCB.
- 124. Governance arrangements between the LSCB, other key strategic bodies, elected members and chief executive officers in each of the respective bodies have been effectively developed by the board and are clearly documented. The independent chair links frequently with the DCS for the tri-borough partnership, while remaining appropriately independent. Key LSCB representatives such as the DCS are able to ensure that safeguarding children issues are considered across strategic boards and that elected members are engaged in the local LSCB partnership groups.
- 125. The independent chair meets with the chief executives of each borough at least annually. However, this minimal involvement does not provide them with detailed oversight of safeguarding within the individual boroughs. The independent chair operates across the tri-borough partnership, and this limits the time available for maintaining links with key elected members and strategic partnership groups such as the health and well-being boards.
- 126. The independent chair of the LSCB, who is long established in the role, actively promotes safeguarding issues across the partnership and community, and provides appropriate challenge. As a result, extensive engagement by partners has been secured across the full range of safeguarding work. Partners are encouraged and enabled by the chair to raise issues and challenges constructively. This is well evidenced in the minutes of the board and its sub-groups.

127. The operational work of the board is well supported. Each of the key partners appropriately provides financial contributions, and these fund the business support team for the board. The team is actively involved in enabling community and service user involvement in the board's work. The board was able to demonstrate the involvement of young people in developing publicity material, but acknowledges that the engagement of young people in helping to develop its work could be further enhanced.
128. Over the past year there have been several changes in the business manager post-holder, and recently a new manager has been seconded to the post. While this has not impacted negatively on the support provided to the board, a business plan to coordinate the activities of the business support team and the work arising from LSCB and its sub-groups is not evidently in place.
129. The LSCB has ensured effectively that safeguarding is a priority for all partner agencies. A bi-annual cycle of audits under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 is currently being renewed. The board has developed and piloted a bespoke online self-assessment tool that is currently going live. Previous returns have been systematically analysed and reported to the board. Schools, in particular, are actively engaged and represented in the work of the board, as are the full range of health partners, police and representative voluntary sector organisations.
130. The quality assurance group of the LSCB oversees partners' multi-agency safeguarding performance across the tri-borough partnership. It draws upon both qualitative and quantitative data, and is supported by the tri-borough performance team in compiling data into a detailed, high-quality performance report. Partner agencies now contribute to the dataset, which was initially extensively based on local authority children's services data. However, the LSCB has not systematically reviewed this extensive dataset to ensure that this is refined, aligned to its priorities and manageable (Recommendation).
131. The dataset reported upon sufficiently enables the LSCB to interrogate its key safeguarding functions. Detailed analysis of the data is routinely undertaken by the sub-group and reported to the board, drawing out themes and trends. Partners provide commentary on the data supplied to clarify and add context to it. The group's report to the LSCB is by exception, identifying issues that the board may want to interrogate further. Responsibility for actions arising from the scrutiny of data lies with individual agencies, but no system is in place to monitor whether actions identified are carried through (Recommendation).
132. A varied programme of multi-agency themed audits has been systematically undertaken by partners on behalf of the board. These are appropriately selected in response to key issues arising from quality assurance and data analysis or to inform short-life working groups. These facilitate learning and identify key areas for improvement in services. For example, a focused audit of young people at risk of sexual exploitation identified effective practice through the involvement of systemic family therapists. While the multi-agency audits

provide recommendations for change, further auditing of the themed issues has not been undertaken to enable the LSCB to know whether practice has actually changed or improved as a result (Recommendation).

133. The child sexual exploitation and missing sub-group of the LSCB effectively monitors information on children who go missing, and this enables the board to have a robust understanding of missing children and their behaviour across the tri-borough partnership. The missing person coordinator provides weekly information on missing children and ensures that this information is updated by operational workers. The coordinator maintains lists of both the top 10 missing young people across the tri-borough partnership, and the top 10 within each borough. This data is suitably analysed through a quarterly meeting, where reductions or escalations in missing episodes are discussed. Through this close analysis and weekly monitoring, the sub-group is aware that only a small number of young people are involved in the majority of missing episodes. This enables those young people to be closely monitored, and targeted work is undertaken with them to minimise risk. Through careful monitoring, the LSCB has a clear picture of the profile of child sexual exploitation and offending across the boroughs. Data mapping has helped build a picture of hotspots. All this information, as well as information on new cases, is fed into the MASE and the LSCB. This ensures that the LSCB has a clear understanding of child sexual exploitation: its profile; offenders; victims; and the quality and effectiveness of services, as well as the hotspots and places of concern.
134. An established case review sub-committee across the tri-borough partnership has a balanced representation from all agencies, including representation of voluntary services and the police. It has appropriately recommended timely commissioning of serious case reviews (SCRs) to the LSCB, and these have been conducted with a suitable focus on the daily life of the child. The majority of reviews undertaken in recent years were completed within realistic timescales, and where there have been delays due to external constraints, for instance due to criminal proceedings, the sub-committee ensures that emerging lessons learned are shared prior to completion, to improve practice swiftly.
135. The LSCB ensures that lessons from reviews are shared as well as outcomes, and these are disseminated promptly across the tri-borough partnership, regardless of their borough of origin. A detailed and succinct summary of lessons learned is circulated on a quarterly basis to all agencies and staff to promote awareness, and a representative of each agency is tasked to ensure its distribution. Participation on the case review sub-committee of the learning and development business manager helps ensure that priority is given to training needs identified as a result of SCRs, and that adjustments to training materials are made and cascaded to all multi-agency partners. The lead designated officer for the tri-borough partnership uses her extensive networks with other boroughs well, so that statutory safeguarding training reflects current practice.
136. Significant cases that do not reach the thresholds for, or are outside the scope of, a serious case review are still reviewed, with a number of significant lessons

learned. The board carefully reviews the criteria for SCRs and, where necessary, will commission one even when formal thresholds are not met if it is considered that lessons can be learnt. The impact of SCRs is evaluated through case file auditing to check for the positive application of lessons learnt.

137. Challenges identified by the SCR sub-committee align well with those faced by frontline workers, including tools to identify and assess early neglect, the quality of intervention in domestic violence, and issues around the mobility of abusive families. A wide range of methods is used to highlight and follow up identified themes and issues with all partners, including a useful website, additional community work and regular meetings with school improvement advisers. The sub-committee has good, close relationships with the three partnership boards, to share themes and provide advice to improve practice. The sub-committee has clear action plans in place for each individual case review but does not have an overall action plan to cover their ongoing work (Recommendation).
138. The child death overview panel (CDOP) effectively undertakes its statutory duties across the tri-borough partnership. It is well attended and chaired. Members are well informed and demonstrate a clear understanding of trends in local child deaths and the reasons for these. The number of incidents across the tri-borough partnership is relatively low, with 23 reviews last year. As a result, there is no disaggregation of data by borough, although work is commencing with other CDOPs across north-west London to gain a fuller picture. Research undertaken into sudden unexplained death led to training for professionals, and awareness-raising around issues such as co-sleeping. A clear understanding of issues relevant to the area, such as deaths in private hospitals, abroad and of older children has all led to further work to drill down and understand the issues and helped to prevent further deaths. An example is work on vulnerabilities linked to death by stabbing. Social Care Institute of Excellence methodology has been used to undertake learning reviews, in some cases, with lessons appropriately disseminated. This is having a positive impact on practice.
139. The CDOP produces an annual report, and this is suitably considered by the LSCB. The most recent report's main theme is related to perinatal and neonatal incidents and life-threatening illnesses. A review of the neonatal deaths was undertaken and concluded that good care was provided. The report appropriately provides a breakdown by age and ethnicity, and some analysis of the issues.
140. A clear and detailed learning and improvement framework has been developed, implemented and recently reviewed by the LSCB. This has incorporated the learning from serious case reviews, themed audits and performance monitoring by the board. The learning and development sub-group of the LSCB undertakes its role across the tri-borough partnership and it ensures that sufficient mandatory safeguarding training is provided across all partner agencies, both on a multi-agency basis and within individual partners' training programmes. All

key voluntary and statutory partners are represented on the sub-group, and they are actively engaged in delivering, as well as developing, training. The sub-group has maintained core safeguarding training, while developing or updating training modules in response to current, high-profile safeguarding issues. For example, a practice-sharing conference on 'Prevent' for schools has been developed and is being followed up by similar events on child sexual exploitation and neglect. The training has led to increased referrals from schools and early years settings are also contacting 'Prevent' teams for training.

141. Partners, particularly the voluntary sector, receive regular information and access to safeguarding training.
142. Members of the learning and development sub-group are fully aware of the need to further develop its work and continually raise awareness of the LSCB. The sub-group has identified the need to undertake more systematic evaluation of the impact of the extensive safeguarding training provided through the LCSB. Currently, the sub-group primarily bases its evaluation of training on self-reporting attendee questionnaires immediately following training sessions. Plans to develop this will require attendees to complete questionnaires three months after the training to evaluate what difference the training has made, but these are at an early stage. At the time of this review, there was too great a reliance on anecdotal information and no formal analysis of the impact of training, either across the tri-borough partnership or at borough level.
143. Most training continues to be provided during the daytime in traditional classroom or conference-type environments. For some partners, releasing staff to attend this type of input is a challenge, and the sub-group has developed some more flexible sessions, for instance to enable police officers to attend. However, the provision of a wide range of e-learning modules, to improve access to training, has been delayed by internal technology challenges.
144. The LSCB has ensured that the needs of key vulnerable groups of young people are systematically reported to, and considered by, the board. It has been proactive in supporting and developing a number of safeguarding services. For example, the LSCB has supported a pilot project to tackle female genital mutilation, an identified gap in services. As a result, 68 women have been supported in the last year through early help, and others through child in need or child protection plans. The board has been instrumental in the development of the harmful practices project, which also reports to the existing violence against women group. This tri-borough project tackles harmful practices such as forced marriage, honour-related violence and faith-based abuse.
145. The highly effective neglect sub-group was formed as a short-life working group, following analysis of the high prevalence of neglect as a category for child protection plans. The multi-agency group extensively reviewed research, SCRs and direct work tools. It then completed a case file audit and established the most effective method of working with families to fit with existing structures, working practices and local need. A further aim of the group is to

raise awareness among practitioners. The toolkit subsequently developed highlights the daily experience of the neglected child and is currently being trialled for effectiveness by early help practitioners and social workers. Early indicators have shown that it creates a focus on the child rather than the family, and that parents have embraced this way of working. An awareness-raising conference is currently being planned for May 2016 in partnership with the NSPCC. This will form the start of a campaign that aims to ensure that awareness of neglect reaches all services within the voluntary and statutory sector. Effectiveness will be measured through various means such as: a re-audit of case files; increased consultation on neglect issues, both within partner organisations and with social care; and a reduction in the longer term of children on a child protection plan under neglect.

146. The LSCB annual report describes a wide range of activity that has taken place to tackle the board's priorities, and lessons from SCRs are appropriately included. However, the report does not provide a rigorous and transparent assessment of safeguarding across the tri-borough partnership. Each priority has a 'what difference has it made' section, although the section is more process- or action-based, rather than evidencing outcomes for children. The report attempts to understand the population across the tri-borough partnership and the differences between them, although there is little analysis of this. No safeguarding data are presented in the report, and it does not detail any challenges or demonstrate their impact. An attendance log shows that some members have infrequent attendance, but there is no challenge to this outlined in the report (Recommendation).
147. A comprehensive LSCB safeguarding plan suitably covers all of the board's priorities. All actions have a lead organisation or sub-group attached, although there are no timescales for completion of those actions. The description of the evidence of impact is, in places, more outcome-focused than the business plan, although this could be further improved.
148. Each borough has a partnership group that operates as a sub-group of the board. The chairs of each partnership group meet regularly to share information and are using individual boroughs well to trial potential new ways of working. An example is sharing the good practice trialled in Westminster around reducing numbers of children subject to child protection plans for more than two years.
149. Westminster partnership group (WPG) is made up of representatives from across the borough's services, including adults' services and a lay member who actively seeks views from, and reports back to, the community. WPG has identified themes and priorities that are pertinent to Westminster and, when interviewed by inspectors, members demonstrated a good awareness of the issues, the demographic make-up of the borough and work that has been undertaken to tackle particular Westminster priorities. They act as a conduit of information between frontline services and the LSCB.

150. The group ensures that preventative work is undertaken in terms of its priorities, especially in relation to radicalisation and serious youth violence. Effective work by an organisation that provides services to young people at risk of violence, combined with awareness-raising work, has helped to protect some very vulnerable young people. For example, the group appropriately identified an issue of self-harm in a school, which was brought to their attention by health partners. As a result, work within the school was strengthened, a mapping exercise was undertaken to understand the issues further, and the curriculum was changed to include an enhanced offer around staying safe, suspicious websites and eating disorders. As a continuation of this work, a health website has been established which provides support and advice, and includes an anonymised forum where young people can leave questions that health professionals answer.
151. The group was able to provide examples for inspectors of where their work in planning and influencing services has made a difference to children and young people across the borough. For example, work has been cascaded across schools in relation to prevention of child sexual exploitation, looking at issues such as relationships and consent. Some proactive work has been undertaken with schools looking at the 10 most worrying pupils and ensuring that preventative work is carried out before risk escalates. Another identified issue involved changes to housing benefit and the impact on families who had to move out of the area. Preventative and supportive work was undertaken to lessen the impact, and to ensure that, for families who had to move, services were in place to support them.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences of children and young people who have needed or still need help and/or protection. This also includes children and young people who are looked after and young people who are leaving care and starting their lives as young adults.

Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children, young people and families. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with families and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the local authority knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

The inspection of the local authority was carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board was carried out under section 15A of the Children Act 2004.

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