

Inspection of looked after children services

Northamptonshire County Council

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Reporting inspector: Emmy Tomsett HMI

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About this inspection

1. The purpose of the inspection is to evaluate the contribution made by relevant services to the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers. The inspection team consisted of five of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI). The inspection was carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
2. The evidence evaluated by inspectors included:
 - discussions with children and young people receiving services, front line staff and managers, senior officers including the Director of Children's Services and the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, elected members and a range of community representatives
 - analysing and evaluating reports from a variety of sources including a review of the Children and Young People's Plan, performance data, and information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day care provision
 - a review of 70 case files for children and young people with a range of need. This provided a view of services provided over time and the quality of reporting, recording and decision making undertaken.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

3. All inspection judgements are made using the following four point scale.

Outstanding (Grade 1)	A service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
Good (Grade 2)	A service that exceeds minimum requirements
Adequate (Grade 3)	A service that only meets minimum requirements
Inadequate (Grade 4)	A service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

4. Northamptonshire has approximately 171,736 children and young people under the age of 19 years. This is 24.8% of the total population in the county. The largest of the five year age bands for the under 19 population is the 0-4 year olds.
5. The number of young people aged under 16 is projected to increase at a higher level than the national average. Northamptonshire will see a growth of 8.36% to 149,400 by 2018; this is in comparison to the England projected increase of 7.44% for this age group.
6. The proportion of young people entitled to free school meals in Northamptonshire is 15.1% (primary) and 12.4% (secondary). Both of these figures are below the national averages. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 18.4% of the total school aged population, compared with 26.4% in the country as a whole (January 2013 school census). The largest ethnic group is from the Asian community. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is also well below national figures at both primary (11.5%) and secondary (8.6%) ages.
7. From the 2011 population census, 10.1% of Northamptonshire's population were not born in the UK or Ireland. Northamptonshire's population is currently growing faster than the England average by 2.8% (2001-2011) and is projected to grow by a further 9% to 754,600 by 2018.
8. The county has a diverse population with 21.9% (2,025) of the live births in 2011 to mothers born outside of the United Kingdom. The East Midlands average is 18.4%. In addition to the increase in births to mothers outside of the UK, 6% of the county's population (of all ages) do not have English as their first spoken language; the highest being Polish speakers (1.8%) and another 0.8% from other Eastern European languages. This trend is mirrored in the child population within schools.
9. On 31 March 2013 the Council had 728 looked after children. The rate per 1,000 is 4.7, compared to a rate of 5.9 nationally. There are 6 local authority children's homes in Northamptonshire and 225 foster care households. The looked after service is made up of four looked after children's teams, the fostering and adoption service and a care leavers' and unaccompanied asylum seeking children's team.

Overall effectiveness of services for looked after children and young people

Grade 4 (Inadequate)

10. The overall effectiveness for looked after children in Northamptonshire is inadequate. While the strategic priorities of the council and its partners are now clear and there is a good level of self awareness, supported by a detailed action plan, these are at an early stage of implementation, with limited impact on service effectiveness. As a result, fundamental weaknesses in services for children looked after and care leavers continue to exist across the service. Outcomes and quality of provision for looked after children and care leavers are inadequate.
11. While there have been some improvements in certain areas of joint or shared responsibilities for looked after children between the local authority and key partner agencies, overall progress has been slow. Operational and strategic relationships are under developed and have resulted in limited focus on shared problem solving to address the range of children's needs; from identifying and delivering on health needs, to reducing exclusion and fully engaging with looked after young people and care leavers regarding their educational and training needs. Weaknesses have been identified in the frequency of statutory visiting to looked after children, the quality and timeliness of care and pathway plans as well as in permanency planning. Too many children are not receiving an adequate service as a result of systemic failures in practice coupled with inadequate management oversight and performance management strategies. There are, however, examples where good progress has been made in respect of missing children, those already involved with the youth offending service and some commissioned services.
12. The improvement agenda is strengthened by strong political support from members and at a corporate level from the Chief Executive. The new leadership team has implemented key changes such as strengthening the Corporate Parenting Board as well as improving the electronic recording system. There is an increased focus on listening to staff, looked after children and care leavers and this has resulted in improvements in staff morale and more effective participation of children in the improvement agenda. While staff morale is generally low, most staff report a visibly stronger leadership team who deliver clear, decisive actions with a rejuvenated focus on improving outcomes for children and care leavers.
13. The local authority's improvement plan ensures that strengthening the voice of the child is a core commitment. Engagement and participation of looked after children and care leavers within the outcome areas are developing with examples of improving impact. The children in care forum is an active group with a member now acting as co-chair of the Corporate

Parenting Board, ensuring improved attention to the experiences and suggestions of those in care or having left.

14. Performance management is inadequate. Effective and accurate performance management systems are not yet fully implemented and managers do not routinely receive regular performance information. The use of comprehensive and detailed performance indicators, to drive and shape improvement, is not sufficiently embedded and as a result sustained improvements are not yet evident.
15. The council's quality assurance processes are inadequate. The lack of management oversight across the looked after children services represents a systemic failure and is consistently poor. The lack of case scrutiny coupled with poor quality and infrequent supervision results in children experiencing significant delays in permanency planning arrangements and poor responses to their needs. A recent intensive programme of audit activity has taken place within social care which has confirmed the scale of the improvements which are required.
16. Workforce planning is underdeveloped. The senior management team has assessed the quality of staff across the looked after children service and supported by improved performance monitoring arrangements, some poor performance has been identified and action taken. This has contributed to the significant loss of staff at all levels, and an increase in the number of agency and less experienced staff being used. However there is a vigorous recruitment process in place and this has led to increasing numbers of permanent appointments. However a number of key positions do not have permanent staff members in post. The local authority recognises the need to further enhance this. There is a commitment to ensuring that key positions at all levels are made permanent, supporting improvement through a more stable workforce.

Capacity to improve

Grade 4 (Inadequate)

17. Ambition and prioritisation are becoming more clearly articulated and are beginning to be increasingly shared by partner agencies. However, the overall pace of progress and improvement across the service has been slow. The level of drive and purpose has been adversely affected by substantial changes across the management structure. Members have not been adequately meeting their responsibilities as corporate parents, but are now facing these challenges with renewed energy and commitment.
18. The local authority is developing a good level of self-awareness and an increasingly accurate understanding of the key weaknesses within the service. The improvement plan is comprehensive and clearly identifies

deficits identified by the recent audit activity and developing performance management arrangements. However, the purpose of the restructure and the implementation of the improvement plan have not been clearly or effectively articulated to partner agencies. Similarly, key messages have not been communicated effectively to practitioners. The local authority acknowledges the challenge to establish and then maintain momentum with the improvement agenda to ensure that the initiatives that have been recently implemented result in meaningful change for children and young people.

19. Whilst the newly established senior management team has delivered determined and decisive actions in very recent months and provided a baseline from which to drive improvement, this has yet to be reflected in improved practice and outcomes for children looked after. Many looked after children continue to receive an inadequate service from social care as well as support from partner agencies. Key shortfalls within health, education, employment and training continue to adversely affect outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.
20. Partnership working across services for looked after children continues to be inconsistent. Some agencies are yet to commit themselves fully to the improvement agenda and to driving up standards of service provision to looked after children at a sufficient pace. Senior managers continue to focus on establishing compliance with requirements as well as raising performance expectations. The profile and needs of looked after young people are included in the agenda of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), the Children's Strategic Partnership and the Health and Wellbeing Board but are not fully considered in the current Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. The focus of these bodies on ensuring the delivery of high quality services to looked after children has not been strong enough. In recognition of this, the LSCB has recently introduced a multi-agency scorecard targeted at strengthening the focus on tracking and monitoring outcomes and service delivery to looked after children and care leavers. These have only very recently been implemented and the use of the data sets and score cards have yet to result in demonstrable improvements.

Areas for improvement

21. In order to improve the quality of provision and services for looked after children and young people in Northamptonshire, the local authority should take the following action.

Immediately:

- ensure pathway planning is implemented in line with national guidance¹, and each plan is underpinned by a needs assessment, agreed objectives and the support provided to make a successful transition to independence and adulthood
- improve the quality of assessments, re-assessments and care plans, ensuring that they accurately reflect the needs of the child or young person and result in effective permanency planning arrangements that are informed by the child's experience, wishes and feelings
- ensure that all workers receive effective management oversight and that this is comprehensively recorded with clear agreed actions and timescales
- ensure that children are visited by their social worker and seen alone in accordance with their plans and national guidance, with records accurately reflecting this
- ensure that supervision is regular, consistent and focused on effective guidance, direction, support and decision-making, evidencing reflective activity on more complex casework
- ensure that plans to achieve, safe, stable and permanent arrangements for children are vigorously pursued and achieved at the earliest opportunity and that all agencies work together in order to achieve these plans
- improve the preparation of young people leaving care for adulthood by, improving the capacity to 'stay put' within family based placements, increasing the availability of suitable accommodation and providing better and more consistent support to them to develop the necessary skills to live independently.

Within three months:

- ensure that all children and young people receive their health assessments promptly when they become looked after and that they are reviewed on time, and that all young people have a full copy of their health history and needs when they leave care
- ensure that workforce plans result in sufficient numbers of experienced staff, to meet the needs of the organisation and children and young people and that training and development are effectively targeted and lead to improved skills and expertise of staff

¹ *The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 3: Planning Transition to Adulthood for Care Leavers - October 2010*

- ensure planning and strategic development are informed by performance information and that this information is effective in tracking, identifying outcomes and emerging weaknesses for looked after children
- improve the effectiveness of the independent conference and reviewing service, ensuring all children are visited prior to their review, care plans are rigorously examined and challenge is effective and recorded
- ensure that work allocated is commensurate with the skills and experience of the workforce, and that workloads, particularly those of newly qualified social workers (NQSWS) are suitable for the experience and skills of practitioners
- reduce the number of children who currently receive a reduced education timetable, particularly those in Year 11.

Within six months:

- ensure that there is sufficient placement provision within the area for almost all children. Improve the range, number and quality of placements for children and young people entering care so that their needs are met more effectively, placement breakdowns are reduced and stability improves
- raise the proportion of care leavers who are in education, employment or training and close the attainment gap between care leavers and all young people in the area
- ensure that the quality of personal education planning, monitoring the impact of the pupil premium and improving progression planning for young people are effective.

Outcomes for looked after children and young people

Grade 4 (Inadequate)

22. Key shortfalls in the quality of practice, partnership working, and management oversight and performance information adversely affect the quality of outcomes for looked after children and care leavers in Northamptonshire.
23. The support to ensure that looked after children access the best possible education to achieve highly is not sufficiently effective. Results have not improved significantly since the previous inspection and the gap in attainment between pupils who are looked after and all pupils in the area is not narrowing. In some cases, education achievement is not given a sufficiently high priority when a change of placement for the young person is decided. Improvements have been achieved in attendance and reducing fixed-term exclusions and rates now compare well with similar authorities. Overall, just half of the looked after population attend a good or better school. The number of young people on a reduced timetable is high and above comparators, particularly in Year 11, reducing their potential to achieve at school and post 16.
24. The outcomes and support provided to young people aged 16 and over in the leaving care service have not been addressed since weaknesses were identified in a previous inspection. A leaving care team is being re-established, but this is too recent to show any positive impact. The proportion of young people in employment, education or training remains significantly below that seen nationally and services have a poor record of maintaining contact with older care leavers. The monitoring of education achievement is poor and raising aspirations to narrow the attainment gap at age 19, including promoting entry and success in higher education, is not effective. Insufficient work has been done to track young people and the fact that some do not want to engage in education or training is too readily accepted.
25. Those responsible for the education of looked after children are committed to raising attainment and are clear about priorities. Schools report significant improvement in the prompt response they receive when requesting guidance and support. Despite these positive comments, developments to drive up standards and remove barriers to learning have been slow to take effect. With regard to personal education plans, only 72% of these plans are in place and, although improving, there remains insufficient focus on setting targets that address learning issues promptly.
26. The activities funded through the pupil premium are identified in some plans but there is no clear impact of these on pupils' outcomes. A

database created to track the achievement, attendance and behaviour is of limited value due to the slow response of some schools in providing analysis of outcomes for looked after children.

27. Personal advisers have large workloads and, consequently, do not offer targeted support or develop an early dialogue with young people in care at 15 years old. A substantial number of pathway plan reviews have been completed by personal advisers, contrary to national guidance. There are some good pathways plans, but only a minority of these have been completed for those eligible and relevant young people. Provision of work experience opportunities and specific apprenticeships with the council and other employers are also limited.
28. Insufficient care leavers have access to suitable accommodation, with high proportions of young people in care living independently from the age of 16. Learning is being disrupted or interrupted because young people move to live on their own too soon and without the necessary skills to cope. Some young people did not feel safe as a consequence. Others, however, spoke highly of their personal advisers providing a good level of practical and emotional support.
29. Strategies are in place to ensure that children and young people make a positive contribution. Schools, social workers and carers encourage looked after children to participate in a range of activities. Activities are also provided during school holiday periods. Children are rightly proud of their 'Coming into Care' guide. Consultation arrangements are well established and there are good examples of looked after children having influenced recent developments such as the pledge, through the work of the Children in Care Forum (CICF). The CICF also co-chairs the Corporate Parenting Board.
30. There are examples of young people's active engagement such as involvement in training of foster carers and in some staff interviews. There are plans for young people to inspect providers, such as children's homes, through the 'Sound It Out' project. Children and young people have access to an advocacy service although this is not effectively promoted, and few children looked after understand how to access an advocate. Similarly a children's survey conducted during the inspection shows that a high proportion of children and young people have not heard of the pledge and do not know how to make a complaint.
31. A protocol between children's services and the youth offending service is aimed at preventing offending amongst those who are looked after, with clear arrangements for monitoring those placed out of area. The proportion of children cautioned or convicted remains above the national average but below the regional figure. The risk and vulnerability panel targets those young people that are at risk of offending, providing support

for them. Meetings in the local authority's children's homes provide young people with opportunities to contribute to the running of their homes.

32. While the local authority has strengthened the range of accommodation for young people detained and remanded to the care of the local authority, some young people continue to be detained overnight. This is due to the lack of effective communication and agreed decision making between police and social care services. The pace of change in addressing this long standing problem remains slow.
33. Arrangements to promote good health outcomes are poor and action to improve these has been ineffective. There has until recently been a lack of urgency by partners to make the necessary changes to make sure that all children's health needs are comprehensively assessed. Timeliness of initial health assessments is significantly below similar areas. Annual review health assessments are often late and, for some, do not take place at all. Adoption arrangements have also been delayed as a result of poor progress in completing health assessments. Children looked after do not routinely receive timely dental checks or immunisations. Young people leaving care are not routinely being given a copy of their health history when they leave. Surveys of children, using the strengths and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ), are now being reviewed by a multi-agency group and this information is used at review health assessments when completed. A baseline SDQ is triggered at the child's first review to provide a baseline for children, but this is recent and is yet to have an impact.
34. There is a gap in services for children who have challenging behaviours including for those who self harm, but who do not meet the threshold to receive a service from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). This results in their needs not being met, also often adversely impacting on their placements. Carers and social workers are not clear about what they can expect from CAMHS.
35. In all the cases seen, the decision that the children and young people needed to become looked after was appropriate. However, children are not always seen regularly or engage effectively with their social worker and this is a serious failing. In the absence of regular contact, children are less able or likely to make meaningful and trusting relationships with their social worker and for some this is made worse by the number of changes in social worker they experience. Although there are some suitable and effective arrangements in place to monitor the provision of external placements, without regular social work visits the local authority cannot be fully assured that their children feel and are safe in their placement.
36. All children are placed in services which have been judged to be good or better. Where providers cease to be good, prompt consideration is given to whether the placement continues to meet the child's needs and

whether a placement move is in their best interests. Whilst long term placement stability is similar to statistical neighbours, short term stability is poor and below comparators.

37. Increased awareness about the risks to children who go missing is well supported by a local protocol and training provided to carers. Missing children are mostly reported promptly resulting in a multi-agency response, including a multi-agency prevention meeting. All children are offered a meeting with an independent advocate on their return. When risks are identified about likely sexual exploitation to young people these result in a timely strategy discussion. However, in some cases seen by inspectors potential risk had not been identified effectively or in a timely way. Young people receive additional support from a specialist child sexual exploitation worker.

Quality of provision

Grade 4 (Inadequate)

38. The quality of provision in services to looked after children and young people is inadequate. While there is evidence of some adequate and good provision, overall the quality of assessment, review and planning arrangements is inadequate. Consequently, children and young people do not benefit from consistent or effective care planning. Children and young people are not routinely seen by their social workers. The absence of up to date plans for many looked after children and care leavers results in the service not being compliant with national guidance.
39. In most cases the decision for children and young people to be accommodated is appropriate and timely. However, a lack of rigour in accurately recording the legal status of some placements at the time of children's admission into the care of the local authority, has led to some children experiencing delays with permanency planning arrangements. The local authority recognises that the quality of reports produced for proceedings is very variable and has taken action to reduce delay and has targeted additional training toward social workers around court responsibilities.
40. Assessments vary in quality from poor to good, with a high proportion being poor. Most are timely but some were significantly delayed in being completed. While some assessments are detailed, analytical and address risk and parenting capacity, many do not contain any meaningful analysis and do not enable an effective plan to be developed. Reflections on the history of the family and the use of chronologies do not routinely inform assessments. Some assessments fail to give sufficient consideration to issues of equality and diversity, including cultural needs. Where the circumstances of children significantly change, this does not routinely lead

to a re-evaluation of their needs or take into account their perspective or experiences.

41. A key failing in the provision of services to children and young people is the absence of plans including pathway plans. The local authority's recent performance information highlights that more than one in three looked after children do not have a care plan. As a consequence, the reviews of a substantial number of cases are compromised and future planning, including transition and permanency planning, is flawed. Plans seen by inspectors were often weak, formulaic and did not identify clear objectives. Consequently the lack of clarity about what needs to be achieved and of effective monitoring of progress made has led to drift and delay in too many cases.
42. The large majority of care leavers do not have a pathway plan. Some care leavers report they are no longer in touch with the local authority due to a breakdown in communication and do not contribute to any plan. The planned development of a specialist care leavers team, alongside other planned improvements, is aimed at addressing some of these shortcomings. It is too early to evidence impact of these changes.
43. The arrangements for reviewing plans are inadequate overall. The quality of social work reports is generally weak and does not demonstrate progress made against plans. Plans do not always reflect the views and wishes of children and young people regarding decisions affecting their lives. In some cases the independent review and conference officers' (IRCOs) review reports are comprehensive and provide an overview of the child's individual circumstances and demonstrate appropriate consultation with children, carers and partners. In too many cases, however, IRCOs reports contain limited information and do not support effective monitoring or planning for children. There is a lack of robust challenge to poor practice by IRCOs, particularly in relation to the absence of plans, the absence of social work statutory visits and delays in producing a timely permanency plan. The IRCOs capacity is limited by the size of workload and periodic reduced capacity, adversely affecting their contact with looked after children prior to reviews. While the local authority has recently strengthened the escalation arrangements to provide effective challenge, these are not yet fully established. The local authority has achieved permanency for some children and young people through residency, special guardianship orders and adoption. However, inspectors found delay in securing permanence for a significant number of children. Only a small minority of children have a plan for permanence as required by the time of their second review. The pursuit of permanency, where appropriate, is not at the heart of planning.
44. The majority of children looked after are placed in a family environment within the local authority. However the local authority acknowledges the need to increase the number of local foster carers to meet need. The

overall quality of provision following the recent inspection of regulated services has been slow to improve. The overall effectiveness judgement following the recent adoption service inspection was inadequate. The inadequate quality of service and progress of care planning were also factors contributing to this judgement. The overall judgement following the fostering service was however good and all of the local authority children's homes were also judged either good or outstanding at their last full inspection.

45. While some children and young people benefit from sustained and positive relationships with social workers, many experience frequent changes. They are unable to form effective relationships with professionals who know them well. Inspectors found some activity recorded on children's cases to be lacking focus and direction in securing children's futures or in helping them achieve their aspirations and full potential. Social workers seen by inspectors impressed as committed to making a difference to children and young people's lives but acknowledge that case records do not fully reflect contact with children or work undertaken with families. Workers attribute this to workload issues, following recent changes in working practice and the spread of work allocated. Managers' decisions are also not consistently recorded and oversight of social work practice is inadequate. The local authority has updated the ICS system to support social work practice and has introduced social work standards to drive improvement, but impact is not yet demonstrated.

Leadership and management

Grade 4 (Inadequate)

46. Leadership and management are judged as inadequate. Political leadership and financial planning have failed to ensure an adequate level of services for looked after children. More recent activity has begun to address this but the local authority is yet to provide full or effective leadership across the range of responsibilities for looked after children. While there is a clear recognition at all levels of the extensive improvements that are required, there is limited evidence of well-articulated leadership for looked after children. A broad and detailed number of actions have been taken in recent months with many more planned, but it is recognised that the impact of many of these changes has yet to be seen. Leaders and managers accept that in spite of the high priority and urgency recently given to service improvement, substantial impact is yet to be achieved. Senior officers and elected members are now both visible and fully engaged in understanding and supporting the routes to improvement.
47. The major focus on achieving compliance, with core performance requirements, is central to the leadership agenda. Many practitioners are

unclear about the aspirations and ambitions of the local authority toward looked after children.

48. Improved management information reporting and monitoring arrangements are in place throughout the local authority, with frequent tests of assurance established across the organisation. Improved information and performance reporting has also recently begun to be provided to the Local Safeguarding Children Board Northamptonshire (LSCBN). However, these systems do not link directly with the joint strategic needs analysis or inform the sufficiency assessment. The local authority has commenced wide ranging efforts to better understand the profile and needs of looked after children. While this is beginning to inform detailed planning to improve services and anticipate future pressures, it is yet to result in tangible changes to service delivery or in commissioning services.
49. The experiences of children and young people prior to, and while being, looked after have not been sufficiently well heard in informing, improving or challenging the services provided. This has been both understood and acted upon in the period immediately prior to the inspection by raising the importance of the corporate parenting function. The increased importance and impact of the Children in Care Forum, formal escalation arrangements and joint chairing of the corporate parenting board are examples of a new, impassioned, and increasingly well informed leadership, noticeably at the levels of senior officers, lead member and cabinet.
50. While arrangements and services are in place to seek the views of children both about their own plans and on a wider basis, they have not been consistently implemented, well communicated to children and young people or resulted in significant changes. A survey of those in care shows relatively low levels of knowledge and understanding of advocacy, the role of IRCOs or how to access the children in care forum. The local authority is clear that its performance is in many respects not equal to similar authorities, is far from that aspired to and is, across a broad range of indicators, well below acceptable levels. Practitioners and their managers confirm the priority given to process compliance with actions often framed as completing system tasks rather than pursuit of objectives for children.
51. Some improvements in some areas are beginning to be achieved, although change is slow and progress is not assured. These difficulties are compounded by a lack of informed, focused managerial oversight, guidance and direction in many cases. This lack of focus has been exacerbated by the extensive changes at all managerial levels in recent months, contributing to discontinuities, delay in making some changes, and an absence of service coordination.
52. Demand and the capacity to respond are key factors, with many practitioners and managers feeling stretched, close to a 'tipping point'

where performance deteriorates. Increased work demands have contributed to poorer performance with delays in implementing plans, less evidence of managerial guidance and short-term responses to meeting the needs of children. However, social workers do feel supported by their managers and maintain a positive morale. While practitioners are less clear about the overall ambition and direction of the service than their managers, and express tiredness in relation to the number and extent of reorganisations of services, a clearer sense of planning is emerging, although this is a long way from implementation.

53. Some recent workforce changes, in response to budget reductions, were not adequately risk assessed and have had adverse consequences in relation to social work capacity. The reductions in family support and personal adviser capacity have increased the demands on social work time and reduced the valued relationship-based support for children in, for example, supervising contact with parents. While some of these are being reversed, it has not helped restore or improve the confidence of practitioners. The local authority recognises this and that its financial planning and resource prioritisation were poor. This is now being addressed, with more appropriate priority being given to ensuring key services are at least adequately resourced.
54. While there are development opportunities available for staff, these are neither fully linked to individual personal development plans nor is there a current arrangement in place to evaluate the impact of training on practice. Arrangements for training support of NQSW and post qualifying training are in place, with local authority training becoming available to locum and interim staff. While more balanced and risk based decisions are now being made there remains significant deficiencies in social work and management capacity within children's social care, and workforce planning overall is insufficiently robust to be confident that these can be addressed.

Record of main findings

Services for looked after children

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Capacity to improve	Inadequate
Outcomes for looked after children and young people	Inadequate
Quality of provision	Inadequate
Leadership and management	Inadequate