

London Borough of Hounslow

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: 14 January 2014 to 5 February 2014

<p>The overall judgement is requires improvement.</p> <p>There are no widespread or serious failures that leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of children looked after is safeguarded and promoted. However, the authority is not yet delivering good protection and help and care for children, young people and families.</p>	
1. Children who need help and protection	Requires improvement
2. Children looked after and achieving permanence	Requires improvement
2.1 Adoption performance	Requires improvement
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Requires improvement
3. Leadership, management and governance	Requires improvement

<p>The effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)</p> <p>Requires improvement.</p> <p>The LSCB is not yet demonstrating the characteristics of good.</p>

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 Inspection 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.

Contents

Section 1: the local authority	3
Summary of key findings	3
What does the local authority need to improve?	6
Information about this inspection	9
Information about this local authority area	10
Inspection judgements about the local authority	13
What the inspection judgements mean: the local authority	30
Section 2: The effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board	31
What the inspection judgments mean: the LSCB	34

Section 1: the local authority

Summary of key findings

This local authority requires improvement and is not yet good because

1. When older children and young people need to access early help services, particularly when they have complex needs, these services are not effective and too many older children come into care because early help services do not provide the help that they need.
2. Important information about the child or young person's history is not always given enough consideration. Some assessments take too long and this means that plans to provide services also take too long to be put in place. Although children and young people are safe, they do not always get the support that they need quickly enough.
3. When children and young people go missing from home, care or education or are at risk of sexual exploitation, the local authority and other agencies in Hounslow work separately to prevent them coming to harm. Multi-agency arrangements are not yet fully in place to make sure that these vulnerable children are fully safeguarded.
4. When agencies are involved in protecting children the written plans they follow are not focussed enough on key actions. They do not always help children and families to understand what needs to change to make them safe and are not always clear and measurable.
5. When children and families need help out of normal working hours, the out-of-hours service does not have access to all the information that they may need. This is important as this service needs to make decisions to keep children safe and consider if they should become looked after.
6. A very small number of children and young people who are privately fostered are known to the local authority. The authority cannot be sure that it knows of all children living in a private fostering arrangement.
7. In Hounslow, too few children and young people are making use of advocacy services to help them to have their voices heard. The voices and views of the wide range of looked after children and care leavers are not gathered well by the local authority to help them to shape the services provided. Although some children are able to get their own views heard, such as those who are on the Children in Care Council, many children do not have this opportunity.
8. Sometimes children are looked after voluntarily with their parents' permission by the local authority when there are sufficient concerns for their safety to allow court orders to be obtained. In some of these cases, this causes

difficulties if parents change their minds about consenting to their child being looked after, which creates uncertainty for the child and their carers.

9. On some occasions when children and young people come into care there is unnecessary delay in making plans as soon as possible about their long term future, to enable them to be in a permanent new home or returned home as quickly as possible.
10. Children looked after have too many changes in where they live. Although the local authority is working to improve this, it is not getting better quickly enough.
11. Independent reviewing officers do monitor the plans for children and young people looked after at reviews, but they are not challenging social workers and managers enough to ensure that things happen in the best way possible for the child or young person.
12. Too many children looked after do not get the qualifications that they could achieve and too many young people leaving care do not go into further education or get jobs.
13. Children and young people are not always adopted quickly enough. Sometimes it takes too long for the local authority to match children to adopters. People interested in adopting children also experience delay from when they first express an interest to when they begin to be assessed, although once this starts it gets done quickly and they feel well supported.
14. Not all changes made by managers have been well planned and implemented. For example, some of the changes in the team that supports young people preparing to leave care and care leavers are not yet working effectively. Staff in this team do not always feel well supported.
15. Oversight by the authority's Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Parenting Panel of safeguarding children and the needs of children looked after is not sufficiently strong. Links between children's services, the Children's Trust and the Health and Wellbeing Board, which bring together all the key agencies in the area, are not sufficiently established to make sure that issues affecting children are prioritised.
16. Managers receive a lot of useful information about children's services, but this is not always fully interpreted or understood. This makes it difficult for them to know if the plans that they have in place to improve services are really working. It is also difficult to ensure that services provided can be matched to the changing needs of children and young people.
17. Currently Hounslow has a need for a high number of placements for older young people in care and is struggling to achieve this, although it has a surplus of foster placements for babies.

The local authority has the following strengths

18. Children and young people who are identified as at immediate risk of harm are kept safe through effective child protection arrangements between children's services and partner agencies. In the cases seen by inspectors, everyone knew what to do if a child or young person was at risk and needed protection, and at what point they needed to take action.
19. Children, young people and their families in Hounslow value the support that they get from the local authority and partner agencies. They have good relationships with their social workers and others who support and care for them. Importantly, these relationships last over the time the help and support is needed.
20. Social workers and care staff have a good understanding of the diverse needs of the children and families that they support. As a result, children and families from Hounslow's many different cultures and ethnic backgrounds get the help that they need in the way that is most appropriate for them.
21. Strong partnership-working has been established in almost all areas between children's services and the other agencies that support children. This ensures that children and their families benefit from services that are joined up and from staff who share information and work well together.
22. The local authority and its partners get together often and share information about adults who pose a risk to children and young people. They make sure that these adults are monitored and are helped, to prevent children being harmed by them.
23. When social workers are dealing with cases where children and young people need to be protected they consider all the risk and protective factors well. Parents who need extra support to care safely for their children are supported well by the Specialist Intensive Support Programme.
24. Young people looked after who are in need of emotional support are helped to deal with any issues they may have through good therapeutic support delivered by specialist workers, and through the direct therapeutic work done by their social workers and carers.
25. Looked after children are encouraged and are enabled by the local authority to maintain contact informally with families and friends. They are also helped to do so safely through the authority's formal contact arrangements. This is done at times and places which are convenient for the children and their families.
26. Staff in the children in care and fostering teams provide high quality support to foster carers and their children. This helps children and young people who are fostered to form strong relationships with their carers.

27. People who want to adopt children are thoroughly assessed to make sure that they are the right people to care for the child. They are well prepared and supported during and after adoption by the adoption team.
28. Looked after children and care leavers who are ambitious to go on to further education or university are encouraged throughout their school careers, and are supported very well so that they achieve their goals.
29. Care leavers have good relationships with their social workers and personal advisers, who know them well and help them to make plans that suit their needs.
30. Care leavers benefit from an increased range of safe and suitable accommodation that is made available to them, and from helpful preparation for independence.
31. Children's and young people's needs are championed by senior officers, staff and elected members across the local authority, who work hard to make sure that the services that they receive are of a good quality and are what the children need.
32. A lot of good effort has been given to recruiting social work staff and to keeping a stable workforce so that children and young people can benefit from having the same people helping them.

What does the local authority need to improve?

Priority and immediate action

33. The inspection did not find any areas for priority and immediate action.

Areas for improvement

34. Ensure that effective multi-agency arrangements for the oversight and review of services and for the management of the individual cases of children who are missing, vulnerable or at risk of sexual exploitation are implemented, recorded and publicised.
35. Ensure that arrangements to identify and support children who are privately fostered are robust and are effectively publicised across the partnership and within the community.
36. Ensure that all initial child protection conferences take place promptly to enable multi-agency plans to be agreed.
37. Ensure that child protection plans are specific and measurable and clearly state what is required from parents and agencies to safeguard children.

38. Ensure that the out-of-hours service has access to Hounslow children's records out of office hours.
39. Ensure that early help assessments fully consider and reflect the history of the child, and their wishes and feelings, and that these lead to comprehensive and effective early help plans.
40. Ensure that the use of voluntary care arrangements is robustly assessed and reviewed and that a legal order is sought if more appropriate.
41. Ensure that the need for secure and permanent arrangements is fully considered at the earliest stages when children become looked after.
42. Ensure that early help services for older children or young people are appropriately focussed to prevent the need for them to be looked after.
43. Strengthen work to close the gap in educational attainment between looked after children and their local peers.
44. The Looked After Children Education Services, virtual school and Pathways should improve their analysis of the wide variation in achievement for looked after children and those preparing to leave care; they should strengthen work to close the gap in attendance and attainment of those young people with their local peers.
45. Ensure that Independent Reviewing Officers provide robust scrutiny and challenge to care planning for looked after children, to ensure that the best outcomes for children are achieved without delay.
46. Ensure that the reasons for placement instability for children looked after are fully analysed, to avoid children experiencing too many changes of where they live.
47. Ensure that sufficient, targeted accommodation is secured for looked after children within the authority's area.
48. Formalise the arrangements for fostering to adopt and concurrent planning, to ensure that children are adopted in a timely manner.
49. Work with partners to reduce further the delay children experience whilst going through the court system.
50. Ensure that social workers and the adoption panel members receive regular training to keep up to date with best practice.
51. Develop approaches to family finding to ensure that a ready supply of adopters is available for the children who are waiting for adoption.

52. Develop a full range of options for care leavers who do not wish to continue in education or go to university, and provide better support for young people to access apprenticeships, work placements or vocational training.
53. Improve the supervision and management arrangements in the Pathways team to support continuing improvement in practice and ensure that workloads are sustainable.
54. Ensure that there is effective oversight, support and challenge of services through the local authority's Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Parenting Panel to drive improvement.
55. Ensure that performance management and monitoring within children's services is underpinned by robust evaluation and analysis and leads to improvement in service delivery.
56. Ensure that an effective and thorough 'test of assurance' is undertaken on whether it is appropriate to combine adult and children's services into a family directorate.
57. Ensure that children's issues are prioritised and addressed through more effective links between children's services, the Children's Trust and the Health and Wellbeing Board.
58. Ensure that a robust sufficiency plan is developed and implemented for looked after children that meets their needs.
59. Ensure that managers provide consistent, effective supervision that is recorded, and that workload is appropriately distributed across services.

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.

Ofsted produces this report of the inspection of local authority functions and the review of the local safeguarding children board under its power to combine reports in accordance with section 152 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The inspection team consisted of eight of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and an additional inspector from Ofsted.

The inspection team

Lead inspector: Pietro Battista

Team inspectors: Brendan Parkinson, Emmy Tomsett, Ali Mekki, Jenny Booker, Christine Davies, John Gregg, Pauline Turner and Kathryn Gethin.

Information about this local authority area²

Children living in this area

- Approximately 63,200 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in Hounslow. This is 25% of the total population in the area. (ONS Mid-Year estimates 2012.)
- Approximately 22% of the local authority's children are living in poverty.
- The school population in Hounslow is approximately 39,400. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals (January 2013 School Census)
 - in primary schools is 28.9% (the national average is 18%)
 - in secondary schools is 31.8% (the national average is 15%).
- Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 76% of all children living in the area, compared with 21% in the country as a whole (Census 2011).
- The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are Asian and Black (Census 2011).
- The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language (January 2013 School Census)
 - in primary schools is 62.3% (the national average is 18%)
 - in secondary schools is 57.2% (the national average is 14%).
- The population is more ethnically and linguistically diverse than the London average, with 46% of people identifying themselves as being of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic origin. The population is quite fluid, with a higher turnover of both international and domestic migrants compared to London and national averages.

Child protection in this area

- At 31 March 2013, 1,758 children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist children's service. This is a reduction from 2,200 at 31 March 2012. The number of children identified between March 2013 and this inspection was 1,617.
- At 31 March 2013, 200 children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan. This is a reduction from 216 at 31 March 2012. At the time of this inspection 223 were subject of a child protection plan.
- At 31 March 2013, the number of children known to the local authority who lived in a privately arranged fostering placement was less than five. This

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.

was also the case for previous years. At the time of this inspection five children were known to the authority to be living in private fostering arrangements.

Children looked after in this area

- At 31 March 2013, 305 children were being looked after by the local authority (a rate of 52 per 10,000 children). This is a reduction from 320 (56 per 10,000 children) at 31 March 2012.
 - Of this number 160 (52%) lived outside the local authority area, 200 (66%) lived within 20 miles from their home, and 70 (23%) lived more than 20 miles from their home.
 - 45 lived in residential children's homes, of whom 50% lived out of the authority area; 6% lived in a secure unit; 19% lived in hostels.
 - 10 lived in residential special schools³, all of whom lived out of the authority area.
 - 220 lived with foster families, of whom 53% lived out of the authority area. 14% were placed with in-house foster carers, 2% were placed with relatives or friends.
 - Four lived with parents, none of whom lived out of the authority area.
 - 25 children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
 - At the time of this inspection, 328 children were looked after by the local authority.
 - 165 children have ceased to be looked after in 2012–13, of whom 12 (7%) subsequently returned to be looked after between 1/04/12 and 31/01/14.
 - 57 children and young people have ceased to be looked after and moved on to independent living.
 - One young person ceased to be looked after and is now living in a house in multiple occupation.

- In the last 12 months:
 - There have been 15 adoptions.
 - Five children became subject of special guardianship orders.
 - 55 children have ceased to be looked after.

³ These are residential special schools that look after children for fewer than 295 days.

Other Ofsted inspections

- The local authority operates two children's homes. Both were judged to be good or outstanding in their most recent Ofsted inspection.
- The previous inspection of Hounslow's safeguarding arrangements was in November 2009. The local authority was judged to be good.
- The previous inspection of Hounslow's services for looked after children was in November 2009. The local authority was judged to be good.

Other information about this area

- The acting Director of Children's Services has been in post since October 2013.
- The chair of the LSCB has been in post since September 2010.

Inspection judgements about the local authority

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection require improvement.

60. Young children and their families who need early help receive a timely response to their needs following the recent establishment of Early Help Hounslow, which brings together many local authority and partner agencies. Universal support services, such as children's centres and youth centres, remain locally based and work alongside a range of targeted support services across the borough.
61. Children benefit from good relationships between early help and statutory services, and from strong partnership working. Thresholds for access to services are understood and are consistently applied by staff from partner agencies. The local authority and its partners have a strategy for early intervention, but this is not sufficiently informed by the analysis or understanding of the impact of early help services. As a result, some are not sufficiently well targeted to the identified local needs. For example the services for addressing some complex needs of older children, such as substance and alcohol misuse, are too limited, leaving them at risk of becoming looked after.
62. Some good personalised work takes place with families where the needs of children do not require the involvement of social work services. The Virtual Initial Planning Meeting is used effectively to co-ordinate timely early help and intervention, drawing on key universal and targeted services.
63. Families now receive better support as a result of Early Help Assessments (EHAs), which replaced Common Assessment Framework assessments in Hounslow in November 2013. These provide a gateway for access to early help services and have resulted in a significant increase in the number of assessments undertaken and families receiving support. However, the quality of these assessments is not sufficiently consistent in key aspects. For example, five of 12 assessments seen by inspectors do not fully consider the child's history or identify the child's wishes, experiences and feelings. More recent assessments completed by the Early Help Hounslow service are of a better quality and focus more clearly on the direct experiences of children. The local authority is aware of the inconsistency and is working with partners to improve this work.
64. Early help plans for children and their families are reviewed regularly, but are not yet consistently outcome-focused. This reduces the ability of staff to track effectively whether outcomes are improving for the child. The Family Star Outcome model is being introduced across early help services to measure the effectiveness of work with families. However, the evaluation of the impact of early help services was not built in from the beginning of the service and remains underdeveloped.

65. Recently revised thresholds for accessing support from the local authority's children's services are appropriate, well-articulated and are used consistently within social care services and by partner agencies. The quality of information sharing when referrals are made is highly variable, but is steadily improving as a result of recent training on the new thresholds. Within children's services decisions about contacts and referrals are timely and are made by experienced practitioners who understand the duties and responsibilities of the local authority. Decisions are routinely made and recorded by managers, with a clear rationale and action plan; as a consequence, the risks to and needs of children are prioritised and addressed appropriately.
66. Referrals that meet the threshold for a child protection enquiry are appropriately undertaken by qualified social workers. Child protection enquiries are robust. Strategy discussions between police and social care staff are timely, clearly recorded and result in well-coordinated arrangements to protect children. However, not all relevant partner agencies are routinely consulted beyond the initial information sharing stage as part of child protection enquiries.
67. Families are beginning to benefit from better joint working between agencies. At the time of inspection the police, probation service and the local authority had established a co-located Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Health and education partners are due to join the MASH in the near future. The MASH was implemented five weeks prior to this inspection and it is too early to assess its impact and effectiveness.
68. Domestic abuse notifications are now routinely made by police and these are robustly screened and risk assessed through the MASH, using standard tools. The new MASH is beginning to help partner agencies to improve their collective knowledge of the prevalence of domestic abuse, parental substance misuse and mental ill-health and to better target their services to address these issues.
69. Risk and protective factors for children and young people are well identified and documented in assessments, and include patterns of behaviour. These contribute strongly to the analysis of the needs of children and young people.
70. Good parenting assessments and parenting support programmes are delivered by the authority's Specialist Intensive Support Programme, including jointly commissioned assessments where there are proceedings in the Family Court. The programme delivers a high standard of parenting assessments and direct work with some children who are either on the edge of care or working towards a return to their birth families. Social workers based in the local hospital also produce good quality referrals which result in effective planning and discharge arrangements for new-born babies or informed arrangements for their protection.
71. Chronologies of significant events in the lives of children and their families were seen on most case files, but these are not routinely or fully used by workers to

inform assessments and future planning. Children in need assessments are not always undertaken in a timely manner and this results in the needs of some children not being addressed as promptly as they should be. However, most eventually result in appropriate offers of support to children and their families once plans have been agreed.

72. While most children in need plans are outcome focused, specific and measurable, the quality of child protection plans remains too variable. Many of those seen do not enable parents to understand what is expected of them well enough, nor to identify sufficiently the consequences of not meeting these expectations. Most plans contain contingency arrangements should children not be safeguarded and these are reviewed regularly. Step-down arrangements for children who no longer need to be subject to a child protection plan are mostly timely, and monitoring arrangements for these are robust in terms of expectations for change and improvements.
73. Social workers know their children well and children are seen regularly and seen alone where appropriate. Where children are unable to communicate effectively or are pre-verbal, practitioners use other techniques, such as sign language and interpreters, to good effect. Most children now report positively that their social workers do not change as frequently as before, so they are better able to develop more trusting, meaningful and sustained relationships.
74. The area has a wide range of ethnic and cultural diversity. Workers have a good understanding of the diverse needs of children and their families and ensure that those needs are appropriately considered and addressed.
75. Initial child protection conferences are not sufficiently timely following child protection inquiries. Whilst children's services take action to protect children in the interim, there is undue delay in ensuring that multi-agency plans to protect children are put into place. The local authority and its partners recognise this and commissioned an independent audit that identified delays caused by communication and administration issues, and these are beginning to be tackled.
76. The outline plans made at initial child protection conferences are not sufficiently specific and measurable, resulting in further delay until the first core group meeting develops the plan into more specific objective tasks. Child protection conferences are effectively and sensitively chaired. Parents and partner agencies are enabled to contribute and the wishes and feelings of children are sought and recorded. However, little consideration is given of whether it may be appropriate for older children to attend child protection conferences to enable them to fully engage in planning for their safety, and very few do. Multi-agency meetings such as core groups and conferences are well attended, with effective collaborative working, particularly with health and education partners.
77. Practitioners and managers in children's services are committed to working in partnership with parents and do this well. In many cases this enables children

to remain at home with their parents with appropriate safeguards in place. However, in four cases seen by inspectors, the prospects for success were low and the persistence in working with parents was unrealistic and led to delay in the implementation of contingency plans for the safety and well-being of the child. In six cases seen, assessment, intervention and planning are predominantly focussed on supporting the adult and addressing their needs rather than maintaining the essential focus on the experience and vulnerabilities of the child.

78. Children and young people are protected through effective communication across partner agencies, particularly when tackling issues of domestic abuse. Information sharing at the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and the Multi–Agency Public Protection Arrangements are robust. Partners have a clear understanding of risk to children living in circumstances where domestic abuse is a factor and where adults are known to pose a significant risk to children. The meetings recommend appropriate actions to be taken by partners within timescales which are both realistic and challenging.
79. The management of allegations regarding professionals is rigorous and the Local Authority Designated Officer service is effective. Allegations are recorded and monitored robustly and the different arrangements for children and adults in these cases are well co-ordinated, diligently pursued and tracked to ensure safe outcomes.
80. Multi-agency approaches to identifying and protecting young people at risk of sexual exploitation and those children and young people who are missing from home, care and education are under-developed. The local authority and its partners have been slow to tackle these issues collectively. Until recently these have primarily been addressed through separate agency arrangements, which have not enabled agencies to fully know the number, extent and reasons for children going missing. Incidents and those identified as at likely risk are now reported to the MASH through the recently-introduced, centralised specialist police unit. This is beginning to improve intelligence, communication and the assessment of such risks to young people. Commitment from partner agencies to improve joint working in these areas is evident, but this work is not yet embedded and it is too early to assess its impact.
81. Advocacy for children and young people is not well-promoted or used; as a result, the voice of the child is not always effectively considered. While the arrangements for provision of an advocacy service have recently been re-commissioned it is too early to see its impact.
82. An emergency duty team (EDT), commissioned from another local authority, provides very limited involvement with children and their families out of hours and responds to emergencies only. The EDT does not have access to Hounslow’s electronic recording system to provide the background information or current circumstances on known children and families to inform decisions. EDT staff have delegated powers to make a wide range of decisions about

Hounslow children, but there is no formal arrangement for these decisions to be discussed or authorised by a Hounslow senior manager. No cases were seen by inspectors where children were left at risk or unsafe decisions were made by the EDT. Some social work staff report that information is not always shared promptly with them by the EDT following intervention out of hours. The local authority recognises the issue and is arranging for the EDT to have access to its children's services electronic database.

83. The number of privately fostered children known to the local authority is low in proportion to the size and composition of the local population, and has not increased in recent years. Activity to increase public awareness, and to enable the community and staff from partner agencies to identify and notify when private fostering is taking place, has not been effective or sufficiently promoted and publicised recently. Privately fostered children who are known to the authority do receive appropriate monitoring and support.

The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence require improvement.

84. Decisions on whether children and young people should be looked after are based on clear assessments of their needs. The majority of assessments seen by inspectors are at least adequate, with some good examples. A small number of assessments have been independently evaluated by a specialist NSPCC service commissioned to consider whether it is safe for children to return home. None of these assessments has resulted in a change of plan for the child.
85. For younger children, the understanding and application of thresholds for entry into care are consistent and care plans accurately reflect risk and capacity for change by parents within the child's timescales. However, a high proportion of older teenagers with complex needs are becoming looked after as a last resort, when they can no longer be supported at home and early help services have not been effective in preventing the need for care.
86. Compared to national levels, Hounslow has a high proportion of looked after children accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act, in voluntary care arrangements. The reasons for this are not sufficiently known to the local authority. In some cases seen by inspectors, an interim care order should have been considered as an alternative. In some cases, the use of voluntary care has caused difficulties for children and young people where parents have withdrawn consent at short notice. In cases seen by inspectors it was not sufficiently clear that other, more legally permanent, alternatives such as special guardianship orders, residence orders or adoption had been fully considered by social workers or by independent reviewing officers. However, more recently such options are now beginning to be considered when case planning.

87. Where younger children return home from care, risks to them are carefully considered and a good range of services is available to support their family. No cases were seen by inspectors where younger children had been received into care or returned home inappropriately. Consideration of the child's long-term future does not always happen by the second statutory review. As a result, some experience undue drift and delay in securing a permanent place to live.
88. Looked after children are transferred from the assessment teams into the children in care teams at appropriate times and always have an allocated social worker to maintain continuity of support, which is particularly important to those who are going through legal processes.
89. While the local authority has a strong focus on achieving placement stability for looked after children, rates of both short term (12.5%) and long term (68%) stability require improvement and the reasons for this are not always well understood by the authority. As a result, looked after children experience too many moves, and more work needs to be done to avoid this occurring, especially in an unplanned manner.
90. Looked after children benefit from social workers who get to know them well and form strong relationships with them. Children are almost always seen alone during statutory visits and visiting patterns often exceed statutory requirements. This was particularly the case for younger children and for children and young people who live outside the borough. Children's wishes and feelings are sought, consistently listened to, respected and taken into account when making and implementing care plans. Records of statutory visits, looked after children review documentation and child permanence reports reflect the voice of the child almost without exception. High quality and sustained direct work is undertaken with children to help them to understand their early experiences and to make sense of their current situation.
91. Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) do not always provide effective scrutiny and challenge to care planning for looked after children to ensure that the very best outcomes for children are achieved without delay. Whilst they do meet their core statutory duties and produce an annual report on their work, there is little evidence that they provide rigorous challenge to case planning for children or engage effectively with looked after children. No issues were escalated by IROs formally to senior managers, despite IROs acknowledging to inspectors that they did have concerns in some of the cases selected for this inspection.
92. Looked after children do not do as well in their education as their peers in Hounslow and this gap is not closing for children at some stages of their education. In Hounslow, the performance of looked after children is similar to those in other outer London boroughs and nationally, but this is not consistently the case across all indicators by the end of Key Stage 4. Through their links with schools and support services the Virtual School team, called the Looked After Children Educational Support (LACES), ensures that looked after children aged three to sixteen years living both inside and outside the borough

have access to high quality education and support. However, this has so far had limited impact on improving the progress that some looked after children make.

93. The educational attainment and progress of looked after children varies widely between year groups. Children's individual progress is tracked in detail through Personal Educational Plans, although collation and analysis of attainment and progress by the virtual school is limited. The numbers of children being compared with their peers in some Key Stages and year groups is small but, overall, the gap for Hounslow looked after children is not closing consistently with their age group in Hounslow or with looked after children nationally. Looked after children in Hounslow make better progress than looked after children nationally by the end of Key Stage 2, notably in reading where concerted support has been put in through the Letterbox Club literacy scheme. The small numbers who are in care before the age of 1, who are tracked through from their primary school education to the end of Key Stage 4, make good progress. However, the majority those at the end of Key Stage 4 have come into care at an older age. Their progress and attainment is not consistently good and most do not make up ground. Some young people who arrive in Hounslow unaccompanied by a responsible adult are ambitious and achieve well with good support. The proportion of looked after children achieving 5 A* to Cs including English and maths, 13% in 2013, has improved from 2012, and is now in line with national, but below other comparators at 18%. The proportion sitting and achieving the easier target of at least one CCSE is high at 84% and 54% of children looked after achieve 5 A* to Gs. Achievement of 5A* to Cs improved from 2012 to 2013 and is now in line with the national figure at 35.5%
94. Tracking of individual children's progress is done through Personal Education Plans, which are of a satisfactory quality. The detailed tracking for each child underpins decisions on how best to support the child through a range of commissioned tuition, coaching and mentoring, homework clubs and enriching activities. In some cases seen, this is very effective in helping those children who have high aspirations, through trips to Universities and 'taster days'. However, those who do not have high aspirations are less effectively engaged and supported.
95. Incidences of bullying are routinely monitored through the Personal Education Plans and children are effectively helped through pastoral and behavioural support. Where children looked after move school, only schools graded good or outstanding are now considered. However, because of previously existing arrangements, only 76% of children looked after are in schools graded good or better. Attendance is closely monitored and good provision is in place for children without a school place. Absence from school overall is low, but persistent absence among a few young people, mostly out of borough, is high and this is being appropriately addressed.

96. There are good services to promote and support the health of children looked after, both in terms of physical and emotional health and well-being, but progress to ensure that all children have timely health and dental checks is variable between teams. While 100% of children in some teams had received these assessments and checks, in the children with disabilities team the figure is 89%. Children and young people directly involved with and able to access 'Da Spot', a children's services resource centre for children, are well supported with health improvement work to keep safe, avoid drugs and alcohol and lead a healthy lifestyle. However, many more children looked after, who are not able to access the resource centre, are at a disadvantage. Children and young people are well supported with their emotional well-being. The local authority provides a range of dedicated therapeutic input for looked after children at all ages and stages of care, which supports the good direct work done by social workers and carers. Looked after children who live out of the borough are well supported to access health services near to where they live.
97. The needs of most looked after children are met well in their placements and good consideration is given to deciding whether brothers and sisters can live together. Children are helped to build positive relationships, contact arrangements are carefully considered and children's views about contact are respected.
98. Children looked after benefit from robust and safe arrangements for contact with their families. The local authority's in-house contact service provides an extensive range of supervised contact arrangements as well as transport to unsupervised contacts. Workers are well-trained, supervised and carefully briefed about the child's history and current circumstances. Every effort is made to ensure consistency of escorts for children. Reports by contact workers are regularly used as evidence in court during proceedings and the quality of these is improving.
99. The Fostering Panel meets all statutory requirements. The fostering service's work to recruit and support foster carers is of an excellent quality. In-house foster carers spoken to were very satisfied with the service that they receive from Hounslow. However, there are not enough foster carers in the borough and the service is unable to increase the pool of foster carers sufficiently to meet identified need. Recruitment activity has resulted in a net gain of 13 households last year, with 18 new carers and five who left the service. The recruitment target for the 2012–2013 year was exceeded. However, those recruited were primarily for younger children and babies whereas there remains a shortage of foster homes for teenagers in the area.
100. The arrangements for procuring placements for children looked after from third parties are robust. They are made in partnership with the West London Alliance and Pan-London arrangements. Placement arrangements seen were safe and appropriate. However, the sufficiency duty, under the Children Act 1989 'to secure as far as reasonably practical, sufficient accommodation within the authority's area' is not met.

101. The Children in Care Council, an interested and lively group of young people, provide good feedback to services and to the Corporate Parenting Panel. However, the interaction between these children and the rest of the looked after population is limited. The Participation Officer makes strenuous efforts to keep in contact with out of borough children but opportunities for these children to undertake the same level of participation activities as locally placed children is also limited.
102. The Corporate Parenting Panel is formed of a committed and well-informed group of elected members who are determined to improve the lives of looked after children in Hounslow. However, little evidence was seen of a strong impact by the panel. They describe their work to involve all local authority elected members and other departments in the corporate parenting task as 'improving slowly', and inspectors agree with this. The panel considers issues raised by looked after young people as a standing item at all its meetings, and young people have attended panel meetings. However, there is little evidence of what impact their views have had in the work of the panel.
103. A designated Children's Complaints Manager is in place. Looked after children and young people are informed about how to complain but are not encouraged or supported to do so. Information about complaints is aggregated and reported on in an annual report. Increasing numbers of children are accessing the advocacy service, but outcomes from this work are not yet available.
104. While a high proportion of looked after children are living outside the local authority area, most live within a short distance of Hounslow. This enables them and their carers to maintain regular contact with their social workers and support staff. Looked after children who live out of the area are effectively supported to access suitable services in the areas in which they live, in particular health and education, where they are not easily able to access services in Hounslow.

The graded judgment for adoption performance is requires improvement.

105. Overall, adoption performance does not yet meet the criteria for good because some children experience delay in going to live with their new family. The local authority is taking appropriate action to reduce the length of time that children wait before they go to live with their adoptive family and for the most recent cases the timescale is reducing. However, the current average time taken from when a child first becomes looked after by the authority to when they go to live with their new family is too long; it is currently 672 days, which is higher than the national threshold of 608 days. It is also higher than both the England average (647 days) and that of statistical neighbours (636 days). In Hounslow, only 54% of children move in with their new family within the target of twenty months, this is lower than the all England average of 55%. This is because of the difficulty the local authority has experienced in finding suitable adopters for the age and needs of some children.

106. Once the court makes a decision that a child should be adopted, it still takes the authority too long on average to match the child with suitable adopters despite some recent improvements. Hounslow now takes 222 days on average. This is higher than the England average of 210 days and of statistical neighbours. As a result, children are waiting too long to meet their new families.
107. Historical delays in finding suitable placements have led to a high number of children, who had waited for a long time, no longer being considered suited to adoption. This is because their needs have changed in the time taken to seek a permanent family for them. In 2012–2013, 32% of children in Hounslow who had a plan for adoption had this changed away from adoption. The 2010–2013 average for such a change was 17%, which is also higher than both the average in England (9%) and that of statistical neighbours (12%). Although timescales for adoption in Hounslow are improving, few older children are put through adoption and there have been no children aged five or older adopted in the last year.
108. A newly established tracking system has been put in place to make sure that children no longer experience any drift or delay in their care plan. A monitoring board, which considers timescales, is now in place and senior managers have recently improved the rigour with which they scrutinise planning for children. This is beginning to reduce the delay that children with a more recent plan for adoption experience.
109. The average length of care proceedings in the area remains too high at 49 weeks. The local court started working to the Public Law Outline (PLO) arrangements in August 2013. The local authority is also developing a tri-borough arrangement to improve the quality of evidence reported to the court and to further reduce delay. The authority has taken a range of effective action to oversee cases before the court to improve timeliness. It is too early to assess the full impact of these actions, although four cases were recently completed within 26 weeks.
110. The Judiciary and the Children and Family Court Advisory Service (Cafcass) staff have good working relationships with local authority staff. The Specialist Intensive Support Programme is acknowledged as providing good reports for court. This service is now used following an agreed letter of instruction from all parties, and this is helping to reduce both delay and the reliance on independent assessments.
111. Social workers write good quality assessments and child permanency reports (CPRs), which is acknowledged by the court. The local district family judge reports that over time the quality of reports received has improved greatly. Permanence planning is culturally sensitive to diversity issues for children and their families.

112. The quality of adoption practice in individual cases is strong, despite the delays that some children experience. However, fostering to adopt or concurrent planning are not routinely considered. This means that early opportunities for a child to live with a permanent family are not maximised. The local authority accepts that this is an area for development.
113. For several years there have been no disruptions of adoptive placements between placement for adoption and the court making the order. Children develop sustained security and attachment to their new family. This is because of the care taken to match them and the high quality of the work done in the adoption team.
114. The local authority has embedded the new two-stage adopter assessment process into practice and this is having a positive impact. Several adopters reported to inspectors that they had a positive experience of adopting with Hounslow.
115. Adopters often experience delay between making their initial enquiry and their assessment starting. Once the assessment starts, they are assessed promptly and are able to access both the consortium and adoption register more quickly than is required. The consortium arrangements allow adopters to access timely preparation training. In 2012–2013, 14 children were placed with adopters approved by other adoption agencies. At the time of this inspection nine adopters are waiting to be matched to a child. Three of these are on hold for various appropriate reasons. This is due to the difficulties that the authority has experienced in finding suitable families for the children waiting to be adopted. Adopters are able to complete safe base training after they are approved. This makes sure that they are able to respond to the needs of their children.
116. Local consortium arrangements ensure that adopters are made available from other agencies to reduce delay. Social workers who are family-finding for children do this alongside a range of other tasks and duties, including assessment and support. This means that social workers cannot always be as responsive as they need to be when finding families for children, which can cause undue delay. Adopters for younger children are often found without delay but older children often have to wait much longer.
117. Adoption support is widely available and effective. Currently 79 children and their adoptive families are receiving support. A range of therapeutic interventions is available through the adoption team; this includes a part-time clinical social worker, which has contributed positively to the stability of adoptions. Contact is carefully considered and arrangements are set out in the adoption support plan. There is a small backlog of work with adopted adults wishing to access their birth records. No formal complaints have been made about the service in the last year.
118. The adoption and permanence panel provides robust scrutiny and challenge to the local authority. Although there have been some recent changes to the

panel, including the appointment of a new chair, the authority has ensured stability and continuity through the independent vice chair. Panel decision sheets do not always follow good practice recommendations, which require the decision maker to set out the key arguments, consider any additional material and explain the reason for their decision. Arrangements are in place for panel members to receive annual appraisals. However, panel members have not received any training in the last year to make sure that they keep up to date with current adoption practice and that they are informed about the national adoption agenda.

The graded judgment for the experiences and progress of care leavers is requires improvement.

119. Young people preparing to leave care and care leavers are supported well through the Pathways leaving care team, who form good relationships with them and who encourage them to engage in constructive activities. This enables practitioners to better assess and understand the needs of the young people, and to help them to plan for their future.
120. Pathways team members have successfully brought pathway plans up-to-date over the past year, where previously too many plans were not in place or were outdated. However, plans are not yet of a consistently high quality. Plans do not always explicitly reflect the views of young people and few contain contingency arrangements to address what action should be taken if the young person's circumstances change.
121. The Pathways team has undergone significant changes in the past year, combining support services for young people preparing to leave care and those who have left care. However, the transition process has not gone smoothly and difficulties remain, with turnover of staff and managers. Staff report a number of concerns about how well they are managed and supported to help young people. Senior managers are aware of and are tackling these issues, which at the time of this inspection remain unresolved. Measures taken to strengthen supervision arrangements in the team are beginning to have a positive effect on the quality of work. However, workloads in the team remain high.
122. Services are tailored to meet care leavers' immediate needs, under the direction of managers and with oversight of independent reviewing officers who track individual young peoples' progress well. Services are provided, in partnership with other agencies, to meet the complex needs of young people as they move to independence. Support for care leavers who are young parents and asylum seekers is particularly well-established.
123. Too many care leavers are not in education, training and employment (NEET) and too few young people have useful qualifications, skills and experience for work. Pathways staff successfully encourage some care leavers without qualifications, including young parents, to return to flexible learning in high quality colleges and community education. Only a small minority of care leavers

make use of these services. The challenge remains for the service to expand its impact to the majority of young people who are not currently engaged. A growing number of care leavers achieve highly and are supported financially and through 'staying-put' accommodation to go on to university, with ten on track to go in September 2014.

124. The proportion of care leavers who are NEET, at 38% overall, is higher than the national average and for other local young people. This represents 110 young care leavers aged from 18 to 21 years. Without the inclusion of unaccompanied minors, who mostly stay on in education, the proportion is even higher at 44%. Every effort is made to meet individuals' aspirations through direct work and partnerships but there is insufficient provision for care leavers to take up vocational training and work based learning. Very few care leavers are currently in apprenticeships, and only two of these are within local authority services.
125. Young people have access to a good range of accommodation through the Housing Panel. Some options provide bespoke guidance on practical and financial skills to maintain a tenancy. The very large majority of care leavers move quickly into permanent suitable housing of their choice. Accommodation for care leavers has significantly improved. In 2011–12, too many care leavers were not in accommodation that suited their needs (80% were in suitable accommodation) and young people, including those under 18, were too often placed in bed and breakfast. Since the opening of further semi-independent accommodation with emergency access, no young people aged under 18 have been placed in bed and breakfast.
126. Provision for those young care leavers with physical and learning difficulty is sufficient and includes 24-hour floating support. Care leavers receive effective community support with partner agencies such as Visions (for substance misuse) and Dfuse, (for emotional and behavioural issues). However, provision for care leavers with housing needs relating to drug and alcohol dependency and other complex difficulties is underdeveloped. There are sufficient mother and baby placements. In cases sampled by inspectors, little use was made of universal provision such as children's centres to support care leavers who are young parents, and the awareness of the support that these services offer was low amongst practitioners in the Pathways service.
127. Young people known to the Pathways team are supported well with their physical and emotional health needs. Health assessments are undertaken before young people leave care and clear action plans are in place that address their health needs. Those with mental ill-health receive good support. Social workers and personal advisors ensure that young people are aware of their entitlement to continuing health support, although the young people's views of what is important in their health are not always clearly recorded in pathway plans.
128. Pathways staff use guidance skills well to inform care leavers of their entitlements. Young people spoken to knew about bursaries for further and

higher education, advocacy, access to interpreters and how to complain. Young people reported that they are happy with the range of services and the level of contact offered by most social workers and personal advisors. Complaints by young people have been appropriately addressed by managers.

129. Care leavers are routinely listened to individually by practitioners and managers about their views on the services that are provided for them. However, representation of care leavers on the Children in Care Council is now low. At a time when this local authority is consulting on revisions to the Care Leavers' Charter, care leavers have too little opportunity to exchange their views and to have a say.

Leadership, management and governance require improvement

130. The development of a combined family services division of the local authority, incorporating children's and adults' services, has been subject to a limited evaluation of the possible impact of combining these functions, called a 'test of assurance'. This is due to be reviewed during 2014. The interim Director of Adults service is due to take on the combined services and the role of the Director of Children's Services in June 2014, on an interim basis.
131. The extensive and well-focussed children and young people's plan and Children's Trust arrangements have been strengthened to ensure coordinated partner agency activity at a time when strategic planning arrangements for children and young people in the area are undergoing significant change. However, engagement with the Health and Wellbeing Board has been approached too slowly and children's issues have not yet been effectively aligned in the work and priorities of that board.
132. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is in place and informs and is consistent with other strategic planning for children's services. There is far less clarity in relation to sufficiency planning for children looked after, which has led to a limited focus on recruitment and planning for an appropriate balance of local and in-house provision to match need. The local authority is not sufficiently specific about the identified groups of young people for whom placements may be required, and does not set out what they plan to do to secure sufficient placements for them.
133. The Leader of the Council, the Lead Member for Children's Services, the Chief Executive and acting Director of Children's Services demonstrate attention, focus and drive to promote children and family issues. However, the formal arrangements to discharge the local authority's children's scrutiny function for help and protection, and the Corporate Parenting Panel do not provide sufficient focus or challenge on aspects of the service which require improvement. Children's services have also experienced additional uncertainties from several recent changes at senior managerial level, with further similar changes planned over the coming year, which adversely affect the continuity and pace of improvement.

134. There are regular, planned and purposeful meetings between all key officers, members and the independent chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). These ensure that all are well briefed and that services are subject to a balance of support and challenge. It is recognised that the LSCB is improving with further developments underway.
135. Extensive support and commitment has been made by the local authority across children's services. Significant staffing and other resources have been maintained and enhanced within children's social care for early help as well as for children looked after. Potential pressures to return children looked after to lower cost local placements are appropriately based on the needs and stability of each child. A high priority has been given to achieving, for the most part, manageable and balanced social worker caseloads, and this supports effective direct work with children.
136. Extensive data are routinely collected to inform management oversight of children's services. Performance reports are fully considered at three-monthly intervals by key elected members and senior officers. More regular monitoring of a wide range of indicators is provided to and considered at all levels of operational management. However, the reports contain too little analysis and evaluation. For example, evaluation systems are not yet in place for senior managers to assure themselves that early help plans are effective in responding to the identified needs of children and their families. This is recognised by the local authority and evaluation of the effectiveness of individual early help plans has recently commenced.
137. The local authority has not notified Ofsted of any serious incidents recently, despite some cases being considered by the local safeguarding children board to see if they met the threshold for a serious case review.
138. Performance reporting is supplemented by both regular and specifically targeted audits, addressing both compliance and some qualitative performance measures. The targeted auditing is determined by existing performance data as well as by specific strategic objectives. Some audits have specifically targeted issues raised in this inspection, such as initial child protection conferences not being timely. However, many of the issues raised in this inspection, whilst known to the authority, have not yet been subject to audit. Findings of audits provided by the local authority on cases selected for this inspection were mostly similar to those of inspectors, although where there was variance, the findings of the authority were more optimistic and positive than those of inspectors. The authority acknowledged this and is now working to develop greater consistency in its audits.
139. A range of commissioned activities and services have been established, based on previously assessed needs of children in the area. However, the local authority has yet to fully develop commissioning opportunities. There are examples of strong and effective work with key partner agencies, for example, with the housing authority in working across the troubled families agenda,

additional supported accommodation for young adults leaving care and in individual targeted work in safeguarding families against so-called 'rogue landlords'.

140. Effective work is undertaken by the local authority within the family courts, which is valued by the Judiciary. They acknowledge increased focus by the authority on making timely care applications, the robustness of thresholds and plans, and the steadily reducing length of time of proceedings, albeit from a base of previously lengthy timescales. Effective arrangements are in place, particularly for implementing jointly instructed assessments of parenting capacity and in the engagement of the local authority with Cafcass.
141. Senior and operational managers have a clear understanding of operational service delivery, mostly modelling an open and accessible managerial style in many parts of the service. This enables them to have a sufficiently clear and extensive understanding of the issues, pressures and performance of the service. As a consequence they are able to consider and devise responses to issues, such as previously high or unequal workloads, and the impact of the rapidly changing diverse population.
142. Parts of the service have not benefitted sufficiently from sustained managerial support, supervision and effectively managed workloads, particularly within the Pathways service. High caseloads also remain a continuing challenge within parts of the intake service. While the authority has been aware of a range of difficulties within the Pathways service for some time, and is highly active in seeking to address these, they remain unresolved.
143. The stability and sustainability of the children's social care workforce has been highly successful in recent years, as a consequence of concerted and coordinated activity by corporate human resources, membership of a cross-authority training alliance and direct focus on recruitment and retention. Particularly successful has been the quality of practitioners supported through participation in the 'step-up to social work' programme. This has resulted in a high proportion of permanent practitioners who have access to extensive programmes of training, individualised support and mentoring. There are reducing numbers of locum social workers and, for example, low rates of ill-health absence. The position at first line management level has been less settled, although it continues to improve. The benefits are evident in better relationships with children and young people, as well as improved knowledge of services and work with partner agencies.
144. The authority values and promotes feedback from service users, and particularly from children looked after, although the broader consultation through the children in care council is not sufficiently well developed. Examples of efforts to seek and learn from the experiences of looked after children include: their involvement in responding to the Ofsted inspection framework; attending a meeting about the Munro review; and contributing to Bristol University research into the voice and journey of the child. These have been

positively supplemented by the contributions of advocates for children with existing complaints. Learning from complaints, representations and surveys is appropriate although not extensive. Regular oversight of the reasons for and outcomes of complaints is exercised by the Director of Children's Services. Some changes have resulted, for example, in producing clearer information for both children and parents receiving services.

What the inspection judgements mean: the local authority

An **outstanding** local authority leads highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** local authority leads effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and those who are looked after and care leavers have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a local authority that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the authority is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children, young people and families.

A local authority that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after or care leavers not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Section 2: The effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board (LSCB)

The effectiveness of the LSCB requires improvement.

Areas for improvement

145. Ensure that the LSCB establishes ways to effectively evaluate safeguarding performance through audit and performance monitoring of multi-agency activity, and that this evaluation is used to improve services.
146. Ensure that the impact and effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding training is evaluated so that its effectiveness can be assessed and improved.
147. Ensure that the issues discussed at board meetings are fully analysed and recorded in its minutes and the LSCB annual report and that this information is used to develop and monitor local plans that demonstrate what measurable impact the Board is having.
148. When the LSCB considers that a case may meet the criteria for conducting a serious case review, even if one is not carried out, the Board must check that the local authority has notified Ofsted.
149. Continue to develop mechanisms to ensure that children and young people can engage with the work of the Board and ensure that the views of all sectors including faith and wider voluntary groups are represented.
150. Increase the influence of the Board by strengthening the relationships with other key strategic groups, such as the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Local Safeguarding Adults Board. To ensure that the safeguarding of children is prioritised.
151. Ensure that the work of the LSCB sub-committees is effectively undertaken and that the work of the Monitoring and Evaluation, Missing and Vulnerable and the Child Sexual Exploitation Sub Groups are influencing practice.

Key strengths and weaknesses of the LSCB

152. Governance arrangements between the LSCB and the local authority are well established, with the LSCB chair regularly meeting with the Director of Children's Services, Chief Executive Officer and Lead Members following LSCB meetings, to ensure that the authority is fulfilling its safeguarding responsibilities. The LSCB chair is a member of the Children's Trust, which helps to ensure that safeguarding is appropriately considered in the wider context of services for children and families. A recent protocol between the LSCB and the Health and Wellbeing Board has been established, but it is too early to demonstrate that the LSCB has influenced the work of this Board to ensure that safeguarding of children is prioritised.

153. The LSCB complies with its statutory responsibilities. The LSCB minutes and the annual report provide a detailed review of the activity of the Board and the extensive range of issues that it has considered. However, the report does not sufficiently analyse the significance of many of these issues and what impact, if any, the work of the Board has made on them. The Board has identified priorities for its partners that are appropriately based on local and national issues, but these are not transferred into an achievable and measurable action plan.
154. The Board has very limited engagement with children, families and the community to secure their views to influence the development of its work and safeguarding practice. An LSCB young people's forum has been recently established, with a committed and enthusiastic small group of young people who are well supported to consider and give their views on the sensitive issues identified by the Board. This forum is at too early a stage of development to show impact. The views of the community are well represented at the LSCB through the appointment of a lay member. However, the views and engagement of the wider voluntary and faith sectors are not well represented at the board.
155. The terms of reference for the LSCB are clear, as are the roles and responsibilities of the chair and board members. The role of the LSCB chair is sufficiently independent. The chair is highly experienced and is well respected by partner agencies staff at all levels. He effectively oversees the work of the Board, ably assisted by the LSCB manager. The chair has effectively raised the profile of safeguarding and appropriately challenged partner agencies and the local authority where shortfalls have been identified. The LSCB chair has recently been appointed to chair the Adult Safeguarding Board. It is too early to assess the impact that this will have on ensuring that the work of both boards are effectively undertaken.
156. The LSCB has actively overseen the recent scoping and reconfiguration of the early help services across its partners, although it is too early for it to evaluate the impact. The LSCB has actively and appropriately maintained an overview of the safeguarding of children looked after, and particularly those placed outside of the area. It has challenged children's services to report to the Board on the effectiveness of these services, although it is too early to show if this has had impact.
157. Performance management and analysis are not sufficiently developed within the Board. The LSCB has recently begun to receive individual agency audits and monitoring information from some of its key partners. However, monitoring and analysis of this information and the impact across the partnership is not regular or embedded in the culture of the board. Performance management and audit models used within individual partner agencies are not consistent with each other or rigorously established. LSCB plans to develop multi-agency monitoring and audit are at a very early stage of development. In recognition of this the LSCB chair has personally undertaken and externally commissioned some

targeted audits. The learning from these has been appropriately reported to and acted on by the LSCB.

158. Safeguarding is appropriately prioritised by partner agencies and this is confirmed through the safeguarding audits that agencies completed last year under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.
159. The work of the Board is primarily progressed through a range of sub-committees and network groups. The Child Death Overview Panel and the Serious Case Review Sub-Group are well-established, well-represented by partner agencies and robustly consider detailed information. The Health and Education Networks are increasingly ensuring that safeguarding issues are effectively addressed within the wide range of health and education services and are reported to the LSCB. However, the progress of work by the LSCB Monitoring and Evaluation, Missing and Vulnerable and the Child Sexual Exploitation Sub Groups, which were restructured in 2013, has been slow. As a result, performance management and development of localised policies and procedures for these areas are at a very early stage of development.
160. The Board maintains effective oversight of safeguarding issues within the Feltham Young Offender Institute (FYOI), sited within the borough. Good communication and collaboration ensure that safeguarding young people is well focused at FYOI through its representation on the LSCB and through the chair visiting the institute and regularly reporting on safeguarding practice. The LSCB has recently established a FYOI scrutiny group to enhance this oversight. It is too early to see its impact.
161. Whilst no local Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) have been recently undertaken, the LSCB has implemented learning from previous SCRs and national findings. The LSCB serious case review sub-committee has appropriately commissioned and considered reviews of individual agency involvement in cases that did not meet the threshold for an SCR. It is the role of the local authority to notify Ofsted of such incidents considered by the Board, but the authority has not done so and the LSCB has not picked this up.
162. The LSCB has a well-established multi-agency training programme, which underpins safeguarding training provided within individual partner agencies. This has been progressively developed to incorporate learning from local serious incidents, issues arising from LSCB conferences and national issues, including learning from high profile serious case reviews from other authorities. Evaluation of the quality and impact of training on improving practice and the experience of children is at an early stage of development. This is primarily based on feedback from training participants through questionnaires and a telephone poll. It is not evident that the evaluation of training is effectively used strategically. For example, some training participants reported that training was too basic to enhance their safeguarding work; however, the LSCB has yet to address this.

What the inspection judgments mean: the LSCB

An **outstanding** LSCB is highly influential in improving the care and protection of children. Their evaluation of performance is exceptional and helps the local authority and its partners to understand the difference that services make and where they need to improve. The LSCB creates and fosters an effective learning culture.

An LSCB that is **good** coordinates the activity of statutory partners and monitors the effectiveness of local arrangements. Multi-agency training in the protection and care of children is effective and evaluated regularly for impact. The LSCB provides robust and rigorous evaluation and analysis of local performance that identifies areas for improvement and influences the planning and delivery of high-quality services.

An LSCB **requires improvement** if it does not yet demonstrate the characteristics of good.

An LSCB that is **inadequate** does not demonstrate that it has effective arrangements in place and the required skills to discharge its statutory functions. It does not understand the experiences of children and young people locally and fails to identify where improvements can be made.

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