

# Hampshire County Council

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

and

## Review of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board<sup>1</sup>

**Inspection date: 18 February 2014 – 12 March 2014**

<p>The overall judgement is <b>good</b></p> <p>The local authority leads effective services that meet the requirements for good. It is Ofsted's expectation that, as a minimum, all children and young people receive good help, care and protection.</p>	
<b>1. Children who need help and protection</b>	<b>Good</b>
<b>2. Children looked after and achieving permanence</b>	<b>Good</b>
2.1 Adoption performance	<b>Outstanding</b>
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	<b>Good</b>
<b>3. Leadership, management and governance</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>

<p>The effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is <b>good</b></p> <p>The LSCB coordinates the activity of statutory partners and has mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of local arrangements.</p>
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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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## Section 1: the local authority

### Summary of key findings

#### This local authority is good because

1. Services for vulnerable children and families are given the highest priority by elected members. Senior officers provide outstanding leadership and have ensured that services are of consistently high quality. This has been sustained over a number of years. There is no complacency. Senior leaders show a strong commitment to continued improvement, and there is evidence of learning from a range of sources. The experience of taking over the leadership of another local authority has been beneficial for Hampshire, with learning used to inform service development. As a result, children and young people receive good support when they need it. Overall, services are making a demonstrable difference in reducing risks and improving the life chances of some of the most vulnerable children in Hampshire.
2. Senior managers in children's services respond quickly to meet changing needs and demands for service. In doing so, they are informed by learning from a wide range of sources including research, serious case reviews (SCRs), learning reviews and complaints.
3. Partners work together well to plan early help services, with effective commissioning and some use of joint funding ensuring the best use of available resources. These services are well targeted and coordinated to meet the specific needs of the communities of Hampshire.
4. The local Troubled Families programme is particularly well targeted and responsive to the needs of families, with good take-up by those families in most need. Although this is a long term programme, the early signs are that it is making a real difference for many families, leading to improved outcomes for children.
5. There are examples of pioneering work and good practice across the range of service provision for vulnerable families, looked after children and care leavers. A range of initiatives is making discernible difference to the life chances of vulnerable children. For example, the local authority is a Special Educational Needs Pathfinder, promoting good practice to engage children with additional needs. A Young Interpreters scheme helps vulnerable children and young people to have a voice in the support they receive.
6. The local authority and partner agencies share information about children and families well when necessary. The different categories of abuse and thresholds for access to service are known and understood across the partnership. When children are referred to children's social care, they almost always receive a prompt response that ensures they get the services they need as soon as possible.

7. The large majority of social work assessments and plans are good quality. They include a clear analysis of risk and protective factors, explore thoroughly key issues such as the impact of neglect, and consider all aspects of the child's life including their ethnicity.
8. In cases seen by inspectors, allegations of abuse and neglect were investigated thoroughly. Social work action to ensure children who need protection are effectively safeguarded is decisive and proportionate.
9. Social workers develop strong relationships with children, young people and their parents and carers. They see children alone to learn their views, and this work clearly informs assessments and plans.
10. The local authority has focused attention on improving social work practice for children and families where a child has a learning difficulty or disability. Progress has been impressive and there has been a significant improvement in the way social workers learn and understand the wishes and feelings of these children. This has resulted in improved social work intervention to ensure that these children are safe and well supported.
11. Child protection conferences, core group meetings and child protection reviews are well attended and sensitively chaired. They are effective in ensuring that risks posed to children are fully understood and reduced so that children can remain safely within their families wherever possible.
12. Decisions about whether children should become or remain looked after are timely, decisive and appropriate. A dedicated Intensive Support Service works with families where a child is at risk of coming into care, to prevent this from happening unnecessarily. Decisions that children should be reunited with their families are well-informed and fully considered. Plans drawn up to achieve a return home are almost always managed well and include the provision of the necessary support.
13. Legal measures are used effectively to ensure that parents understand professional concerns and what needs to improve for their children to be safe from harm. Where necessary, care proceedings are initiated quickly to ensure that children are not subject to neglect and other damaging home conditions for too long. This work is supported by good quality legal advice to ensure actions to safeguard children have the best chance of success.
14. Long term planning to secure children's futures is given the highest priority. The search for suitable alternative families starts at the earliest possible stage. The contribution made by the adoption service is outstanding. The number of children placed for adoption has grown significantly over the last two years, with performance that exceeds that of other local authorities.
15. Dedicated funding is used very well to address both the pastoral and educational needs of looked after children so that they can engage well in learning. These children's school attendance is much improved since 2010.

Levels of educational attainment at Key Stages 1 and 2 are in line with the 2013 national average and improving.

16. The local authority takes its responsibility as a corporate parent for looked after children very seriously. Elected members are ambitious for children and young people in their care. They have ensured that their vision for high quality services is underpinned by appropriate financial resources. This provides a sound basis for good service planning and provision.
17. Twenty-one young people who have experience of being looked after act as care ambassadors. They provide an innovative and effective means of gathering the views of looked after children and care leavers, and ensuring that they influence the shape of services so that they get the help they need.
18. Young people are well supported when they leave care. They and their social workers draw up clear and timely plans to help them make the transition. A high percentage of care leavers are in employment, education or training. A 'Staying Put' scheme has enabled a growing number of care leavers to remain with their carers beyond the age of 18 and this is bringing demonstrable improvements to their life chances.

### **What does the local authority need to improve?**

#### **Areas for improvement**

19. Ensure that all child in need cases receive a prompt and proportionate response to having their circumstances assessed and their needs met.
20. Ensure that social workers' caseloads in the Referral and Assessment teams are manageable and regularly reviewed, so that the quality of service experienced by children and families is not compromised.
21. Ensure that all newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) have a protected and balanced case load in their first year of service, to promote their professional development and maintain the quality of services.
22. Ensure that independent reviewing officers (IROs) have the capacity to carry out all their required duties effectively, including making contact with children between reviews so they can take full account of children's wishes and feelings when planning for their futures.
23. Ensure that all looked after children make good or better progress in each key stage of their education over time, particularly in Key Stage 4.
24. Ensure that all looked after children have regular and timely dental checks, and that the emotional health needs of children and young people are not compromised because they live outside the county.

25. Improve the awareness of looked after children and care leavers of their entitlements.
26. Consider how the routine involvement of looked after children and care leavers in key decision-making forums can be developed, so that their views are fully taken into account in the shaping of 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 LSCB 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 LSCB 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) from Ofsted and two contracted inspectors.

### **The inspection team**

Lead inspector: Gary Lamb HMI

Team inspectors: Janet Fraser HMI, Peter McEntee HMI, Stephanie Murray HMI, Matthew Brazier HMI, Bill Wallace HMI, Carmen Rodney HMI, Emmy Tomsett HMI, Nick Stacey and Deane Jennings.

## Information about this local authority area<sup>2</sup>

### Children living in this area

- Approximately 280,150 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in Hampshire. This is 21% of the total population in the area.
- Approximately 12% of the local authority's children are living in poverty.
- The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
  - in primary schools is 11% (the national average is 18%)
  - in secondary schools is 9% (the national average is 15%)
- Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 8% of all children living in the area, compared with 22% in the country as a whole.
- The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are Mixed (3%) and Asian or Asian British (3%).
- The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:
  - in primary schools is 5% (the national average is 18%).
  - in secondary schools is 4% (the national average is 14%).
- In 2013, 9.7% of Hampshire's children and young people come from black and minority ethnic (BME) and Traveller heritages, with 4.7% recorded as having English as an Additional Language (EAL). Hampshire encompasses a large geographical area which is split into eleven district and borough council areas, each with its own distinct character. There is a Nepalese community in Rushmoor (Aldershot and Farnborough) and a Polish community in Basingstoke. There are Gypsy Roma and Traveller communities in many districts of Hampshire, particularly the New Forest and East Hampshire. More than 125 different languages are spoken in Hampshire schools.

### Child protection in this area

- At 31 March 2013, 6,502 children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist children's service. This is an increase from 6,312 at March 2012.
- At 31 March 2013, 909 children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan. This is an increase from 795 at 31 March 2012.
- At 31 March 2013, 18 children lived in a privately arranged foster placement. This is the same number as at 31 March 2012.

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<sup>2</sup> The local authority was given the opportunity to review this section of the report and has updated it with local invalidated data where this was available.



## Children looked after in this area

- At 31 March 2013, 1,131 children are being looked after by the local authority (a rate of 40 per 10,000 children). This is an increase from 1,103 (39 per 10,000 children) at 31 March 2012. Of this number:
  - 309 (or 27%) live outside the local authority area
  - 86 live in residential children’s homes, hostels or secure units of whom 47.7% live out of the authority area
  - 19 live in residential special schools<sup>3</sup>, of whom 73.7% live out of the authority area
  - 833 live with foster families, of whom 25.8% live out of the authority area
  - 84 live with parents, of whom 20.2% live out of the authority area
  - 24 children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- In the last 12 months:
  - there have been 62 adoptions
  - 30 children became subject of special guardianship orders
  - 464 children ceased to be looked after, of whom 6.9% subsequently returned to be looked after
  - 34 children and young people ceased to be looked after and moved on to independent living.

## Other Ofsted inspections

- The local authority operates 11 children’s homes. Ten were judged to be good or outstanding in their most recent Ofsted inspection.
- The previous inspection of Hampshire’s safeguarding arrangements was in August 2011. The local authority was judged to be good.
- The previous inspection of Hampshire’s services for looked after children was in August 2011. The local authority was judged to be good.

## Other information about this area

- The Director of Children’s Services has been in post since August 2005.
- The chair of the LSCB has been in post since April 2013.

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

## **Inspection judgements about the local authority**

### **The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection are good.**

27. Children and their families have access to a wide range of good and still improving early help services. Partners have carefully considered how thresholds for access to services, a single assessment process and the provision of early help can be further improved. As part of the Eastleigh Early Help Hub pilot, they have introduced a much clearer thresholds framework, a clear pathway for help and support and better assessment tools. Intuitive and well-coordinated processes are resulting in swifter provision of help to families, including those who have been stepped down from children's social care. Partner agencies have signed up to the new process and there is a clear plan for the extension of this model to all areas in Hampshire by October 2014.
28. Arrangements for partnership working are good. The local authority and its partners ensure timely and proportionate information sharing between children's social care, health, police and adult service professionals. Issues of parental consent are well understood and part of routine practice. Appropriate referrals are made by professionals, and family circumstances and history are well summarised and analysed. This leads to swift and safe decisions about next steps in the large majority of cases. Social workers make clear recommendations regarding threshold decisions. In a very large majority of cases these are subject to timely, analytical and coherent management oversight and decision-making.
29. The way in which new referrals to children's social care are handled is robust. A two stage entry process includes a Children's Reception Team and a new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub which only became fully operational during the inspection. This has further strengthened the effective arrangements that already existed and means that children and their families get help at the right time and right level in almost all cases.
30. The out of hours service is well staffed with adult services and children's services social workers. It has sufficient capacity to respond to all children who need protection out of office hours. The large majority of out of hours cases seen were responded to well, with appropriate direct intervention with families, liaison with police, clear and timely decision-making and prompt communication with daytime teams. As a result, children's immediate welfare is assured.
31. Social workers develop strong and constructive relationships with children and young people who need help and protection. They see children alone and use creative ways to ensure that their voices are heard, so that they understand what is happening to them and are fully engaged with their plans. Parents report that they value the caring and 'no nonsense' approach of social workers, saying that they are in no doubt about what they need to do to change and why. Social workers speak openly, warmly and authoritatively about the families

they are working with and they are proud of children's achievements. They use interpreters confidently and routinely so that parents and children whose first language is not English can participate fully in assessments, plans and other work aimed at helping them.

32. Where children and young people are considered to be at risk of harm there is an immediate response from the Children's Reception Team and MASH. Presenting concerns and family history are quickly assimilated and next steps are agreed by a manager. The large majority of child protection enquiries are of a good standard or better. Children are seen alone by social workers, multi-agency checks are undertaken thoroughly and there is clear analysis of risks and strengths, leading to safe and proportionate actions. Although child protection activity in Hampshire is rising, with the number of children subject to a Section 47 investigation up from 70 per 10,000 (March 2013) to 82 per 10,000 (December 2013), this rise is in step with comparable local authorities. The thresholds for access to child protection services are well understood and consistently applied by children's social care.
33. A very large majority of face-to-face child protection strategy meetings are of a high quality, both in the information shared and the decisions made. However, most records of strategy discussions that take place over the telephone are too brief and lack detail, so it is not always clear how decisions were reached. The very recent launch of the MASH has led to a significant increase in the proportion of strategy discussions that are face-to-face, but it is too early to see the full impact of these changes.
34. Domestic abuse within families is initially evaluated by the police, who quantify potential risk and ensure that the appropriate next steps are taken, including referral to multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) and direct offers of help. The police risk analysis is shared with children's social care, and the assessment and offer of help that follow are proportionate and informed by a good understanding of family history. This provides a clear view of the risks posed and enables effective interventions to protect children. There are many examples of creative work with parents to help them understand the impact of domestic abuse on young children. Specialist services such as drug and alcohol programmes help parents to make safe choices to keep their children safe from harm.
35. In a very small number of cases (nine) where children were assessed as requiring a low level service, there were delays before child in need assessments were undertaken. Although no child was left at risk of significant harm, needs within these families remained unmet for too long. Supervision files demonstrate that first line managers are aware of this problem and are taking action to address it.
36. Most social workers receive effective and timely supervision, although records do not always demonstrate that sufficient time is given for reflection. Management oversight and decision-making within casework are robust, and

the vast majority of recommendations are analysed and ratified by at least one manager. Decisions are made by social workers and managers at an appropriate level. For example, the work undertaken by children and families support workers, which is of a consistently high standard, is matched to their skills and experience and is stringently overseen by qualified social workers and managers. However, a small number of social workers in Referral and Assessment teams have caseloads that are too high, and this is reducing the quality of support provided to families. Although the majority of newly qualified social workers have protected caseloads, and all have work allocated that is appropriate to their level of experience, inspectors saw four who had caseloads that were too high. This was acknowledged by the local authority and corrective action taken.

37. The quality of the large majority of children and family single assessments is good or better, with careful account taken of family history, clear analysis of risk and need, and comprehensive consideration of all aspects of children's lives including their ethnicity and family belief systems. Social workers routinely explore family homes and observe children in order to understand their experiences. In a small minority of cases, assessments and interventions are informed by research findings. The new single assessment has been welcomed by social workers and is a well thought-out approach. However, practitioners undertaking these assessments are not always clear about how long each one should take, and this has led to timescales in a small minority of cases being unduly influenced by workloads rather than the needs and risk factors within individual families.
38. Child protection conferences are well attended and most meetings are sensitively and effectively chaired, with key information being shared and weighed to reach appropriate decisions. However, the quality of child in need and child protection plans is not consistently good. A significant minority of these plans lack clarity about risks and desired outcomes. Managers are aware of this and have increased their audit activity, which is helping to support improvement. Core groups are regular and well attended. They are competently chaired, appropriately recorded, and are effective in tracking the progress of child protection plans. Risk to children from adult behaviour is particularly well addressed in these meetings, leading to clear messages to parents about what needs to change and to the right offer of help.
39. Advocacy is not consistently provided to children and young people who are subject to child protection conferences and plans. Last year only three children and young people subject to a child protection conference benefited from this support. This is acknowledged by the local authority and firm plans are in place to address this through strengthened commissioning arrangements from April 2014.
40. The local authority and Hampshire Local Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) have sought to increase the focus on risk within families where a child has a disability. The work of the Disabled Children's sub-group of HSCB and recent

conferences on this theme have been effective in improving practice, leading to an appropriate sharp increase in the number of children with disabilities who are made subject to child protection plans. Social workers and managers have a good understanding of the impact of adult behaviour and difficulties on children with disabilities and their siblings. Risk- and strength-based assessments and plans are leading to tangible improvements in children's lives. The direct work undertaken with children with disabilities is particularly impressive. Social workers go to great lengths to ensure that children are helped to communicate their feelings and to make sense of their lives through the effective use of, for example, tailor-made picture books, Makaton and Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECs).

41. The police and children's social care work together effectively to assess and reduce risks to children who go missing from home and those who are at risk of sexual exploitation or trafficking. Where concerns are identified, young people are supported through the use of effective child in need or child protection plans. Partner agencies acknowledge that the previous return interview process was not sufficiently robust, and that the experiences of individual children who go missing have not been consistently analysed or understood. Steps have very recently been taken to improve this. Early signs are positive, with social workers beginning to use the new return interview checklist to explore and address young people's behaviour and vulnerabilities. The Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment tool is valued by professionals and is being used effectively to support the identification of risk and to plan responses to meet the individual needs of children. The LSCB monitors this area of work closely and uses aggregate data to track trends and shape services.
42. The help provided to families where there is parental substance misuse, domestic abuse or mental ill-health is well targeted. Family assessments include a clear analysis of adult needs as well as those of the children, and lead to children being helped and safeguarded effectively. There is a Joint Working Protocol that is frequently referred to by adults' and children's practitioners and their managers, and that supports effective joint practice across a range of agencies.
43. The Ethnic Minorities and Traveller Achievement Service (EMTAS) is exemplary provision, working on a wide range of projects to improve the life chances of children from diverse minority ethnic groups. The key strength of this service lies in its ability to lead creatively and win the trust of schools, community groups and families. This work has had a significant impact on improving attendance for certain groups of pupils notably those of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage. The service is highly effective in meeting the requirements of the Equality Act (2010) in relation to race and ethnicity. It has increased social workers' awareness on a range of matters such as cultural identity and support for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. The Young Interpreters scheme is another excellent example of practice that supports and develops children and young people's confidence and leadership skills within schools.

44. Effective attendance procedures are used to tackle persistent absence, which is a key priority for improvement. Clear criteria are used to identify the main factors affecting low attendance, and appropriate support is identified before concerns are escalated through legal action. In Basingstoke, a multi-agency pilot project is taking a 'whatever it takes' approach to creating sustained change. This has resulted in a decline in persistent absence among pupils with previously poor rates of attendance. Good arrangements are in place to monitor the attendance of vulnerable children, including those placed out of the county and others who are home educated.
45. Good systems are used to ensure that children in need get a good start to their education. Effective use of data to track children's progress begins in early years. At this stage, schools begin to identify very early children at risk of delay in developing good basic literacy skills. These children are given the support they need at an early stage. Robust analysis of information on children's progress ensures that all groups have equal access to support. Since 2009, the attainment gap has shown a year by year improvement.
46. The local Troubled Families programme is well-structured and increasingly effective at meeting the needs of local families. Although this is a long term programme, early intervention is showing signs of effectiveness in creating change. For example, joint work with Job Centre Plus has contributed to 55 of 400 unemployed adults returning to work this year. Over 1,300 families are now engaged with the programme and there has already been a positive outcome in 397 families.
47. The management of allegations regarding adults in a position of trust is robust, the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is well understood and thresholds for referral are well applied. Investigations are coordinated well to ensure children are protected. In the cases seen by inspectors, the LADO was a valuable source of expertise and advice to partner agencies, including private and independent schools.
48. Children and young people who are privately fostered receive regular statutory monitoring visits which are sensitive to their ethnicity and disabilities. Their safety is carefully considered and their health and wellbeing is promoted. The local authority has taken extensive action, for example with schools, to raise awareness about this issue, but this has not led to a rise in notifications. Numbers remain stable at 18.

### **The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence are good**

49. Decisions about whether children should become looked after are timely and evidence-based, and the right children are in care. Decisions are underpinned by effective and accessible legal advice and strong management oversight, as clearly evidenced by the regular, focused and well-attended legal planning meetings. The average length of time it takes to conclude care proceedings has

reduced significantly, and is now close to the national target. Some cases are concluded well within the 26 week target. Social workers are supported well to produce consistently good quality assessments that are accepted by the courts. Assessments of wider family members as possible carers are undertaken promptly, and historical information is taken into account appropriately to minimise delay for children. The revised Public Law Outline is used effectively, providing clarity to parents about expectations and the possible consequences should those expectations not be met.

50. The Intensive Support Service (ISS) provides effective, timely support to children on the edge of care to prevent them entering care unnecessarily. There are also many examples of the ISS successfully providing support to looked after children to prevent placement breakdowns. Children and their parents and carers benefit from coherent, evidence-based support provided by suitably trained support workers. The local authority's own evaluation of the service demonstrates that in the large majority of cases, the goals agreed with the family when the ISS first became involved are achieved. Decisions that children should be reunited with their families are properly considered and backed by clear and focused support plans that are implemented well.
51. Looked after children are visited and spoken to alone regularly by their social workers. Professionals and carers know children well. The views, wishes and feelings of children are strongly evident in care planning and in case recording. This helps children to thrive where they live. Nearly all looked after children spoken to by inspectors were happy with the care that they receive. Records of visits to children are effectively summarised in a style which children, young people and families understand.
52. There is a marked determination from those involved with the care of children to provide a nurturing environment for them and to meet their emotional needs. For example, the use in Hampshire's children's homes of a clear and consistent research-based model of practice, Pillars of Parenting, has contributed to some very positive outcomes for children who might otherwise not be able to remain where they are. This model enables the suitably trained staff to provide emotionally sensitive care to children, and demonstrates strong multi-agency working, for example with psychologists, to develop and implement programmes of support for individual children.
53. The considerable investment by the local authority in the construction of new children's homes, while redeveloping others, provides evidence of its commitment to residential care as a positive choice for those young people whose needs are better met in children's homes.
54. There are robust reporting and monitoring arrangements for children missing from care and subject to associated risks. Social workers and the police work well together to assess and manage risks posed to children when they go missing. Inspectors saw some examples of well-recorded interviews with children who have returned from going missing. However, the local authority's

monitoring shows that the use of these interviews is not consistently applied, and that those undertaken are not all of sufficient quality. This limits the local authority's ability to understand the reasons and circumstances behind missing episodes and to make suitable plans to keep children safe. The use of a new form, designed to record issues raised by return interviews more effectively, has been implemented, but it is too early to assess its impact.

55. In the majority of cases seen by inspectors, children's health needs have been addressed well and are improving. Immunisations and health assessments are undertaken regularly and at a rate in line with comparable local authorities, although a significant minority of children have not received a recent dental check.
56. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) gives high priority to meeting the needs of looked after children. Dedicated specialist CAMHS professionals for looked after children provide good, timely support to staff and carers, and assessments undertaken by CAMHS are timely and of good quality. When necessary, agencies work together well to make sure appropriate packages of health care are in place to meet complex needs. This is exemplified by the support given to some young people for their drug and alcohol abuse and mental health difficulties, which has helped to stabilise their lives and reduce their level of offending.
57. Levels of educational attainment for looked after children are in line with the national average and are improving in Key Stages 1 and 2. The best results in four years were achieved in 2013 in both key stages, when most pupils made good progress. In comparison with previous years, the proportion of young people achieving five or more GCSE grades A\*-C, including English and mathematics, was low in 2013. This was due in part to a large majority of the cohort having special educational needs, with a minority having a statement of special educational needs. Current tracking data on progress indicates that GCSE results for children in this year's cohort should be better.
58. There are examples of looked after children achieving good results. Well-targeted support and use of the Pupil Premium funding to provide extra tuition enabled all looked after children in one school to achieve at least five good GCSEs.
59. Alternative education provision is used appropriately and effective systems, including managed moves support the small number of children who have received a fixed term exclusion from school. No looked after child was permanently excluded during 2012–2013. Attendance is much improved since 2010. Overall absence was 6.1% in 2013, but remains slightly above the national average of 5.3%. The local authority still has more to do, however, to reduce the persistent absence of a small minority of pupils.
60. The Virtual Head Teacher provides strong leadership and a clear strategic vision for improvement. A cohesive virtual school team works closely with schools.



They ensure that Pupil Premium funding is used to good effect to address both the pastoral and educational needs of looked after children so that they can engage well in learning. In-depth research and consultation, resulting in an excellent toolkit, have been used to develop a new personal education plan (PEP). Schools have embraced the more analytical approach it brings to the use of PEPs. There is a sharp focus on holding schools to account through performance management. The local authority has a formal protocol in place to ensure that most looked after children attend schools that are good or better.

61. Looked after children are encouraged to pursue a range of social and recreational activities. For example, the leisure pass for looked after children enables concessionary access to council leisure services, and is also available to carers and their birth children. The Dance Academy is an innovative cross-partnership project that has achieved some outstanding outcomes for many young people with complex needs, for example reduced offending, reintegration into mainstream school, improved placement stability, employment and artistic achievement at a national level.
62. There is demonstrable commitment from the local authority to securing permanent homes for looked after children and strong evidence that financial considerations do not compromise long-term planning to achieve this. Family-finding commences at the earliest possible stage and is suitably urgent and far-reaching. The matching of children with permanent carers is thoughtful and measured, ensuring that they have the best possible opportunities to settle with families and to be happy. The use of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) in Hampshire is low but rising. In 2010–11 it was 6.5%, compared with the national average of 9%. The local authority has recognised this and has renewed its emphasis on exploring this placement choice. As a result, numbers have increased by 2% to 30 children at December 2013, based on performance at December 2012. Plans enable children to live with their brothers and sisters whenever it is in their best interests. Since April 2013 the very large majority (87%) of siblings have been placed together. A high priority is placed on undertaking life-story work at the earliest possible stage, so that children can be helped to know and make sense of their histories and identities.
63. Social workers and other professionals ensure that children are able to see and keep in touch with parents and other relatives wherever possible. Risks associated with contact are carefully and sensitively managed. Contact with family members that helps children to understand and have a positive view of their ethnic and cultural identity is actively promoted.
64. In the cases seen by inspectors, decisions that looked after children should live out of the county are appropriate. Looked after children living outside the county are visited regularly and their progress is closely monitored. Children spoken to by inspectors, including some living a considerable distance from the county, said that they feel safe where they live and that they get the help they need. The local authority has identified, however, that there remain some difficulties in ensuring that CAMHS services are in place when children move to

other areas. This has caused delay and disruption to some children's treatment plans. Firm plans are in place to address this by April 2014.

65. Action to recruit and retain foster carers is well targeted. The profile of Hampshire's foster carers reflects the ethnicity of its looked after children. There has been success in recruiting new carers, but in-house fostering capacity is not increasing in line with the looked after children population. To ensure that recruitment keeps pace with requirements to provide suitable placement choice for all looked after children is a challenge for the local authority.
66. Hampshire's existing in-house foster carers are very well supported to develop their skills in meeting the needs of looked after children. They variously described the support they receive from their family placement social workers (FPSWs) as 'fantastic', 'excellent', and 'amazing'. Foster carers receive regular, helpful visits from FPSWs and challenging reviews are undertaken of their professional development as carers. They report similarly positive views about the support children receive from children's social workers. Carers have very good access to relevant training, which is targeted at meeting their own individual needs and those of the children for whom they are caring. Foster carers report that they feel fully included as part of the professional team responsible for looked after children, and that their own children are effectively engaged in the fostering process.
67. The 'Staying Put' in foster care arrangements enable some young people to remain with their foster carers after the age of 18. This is a strong feature of the local authority's response to secure the futures of looked after children. Currently 52 young people are benefitting from this scheme after their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The number of children experiencing too many placement moves remains stubbornly high. The local authority has thoroughly analysed the reasons for this and steps have been taken to minimise disruption for children. The impact of these initiatives is not yet fully evident, though inspectors encountered several examples where the care and support provided by the local authority had improved individual children's stability and overall outcomes.
68. The local authority has appointed 21 young people who have experience of being looked after to act as care ambassadors, and to represent and support Hampshire's looked after children. The ambassadors are an impressive group of highly-motivated young people. With effective support, they lead the 'virtual' model of the children in care council. This is part of a sensible and effective approach to the challenge the local authority faces when seeking to capture the views of a high number of looked after children living across a large county and beyond. Regular activity days for looked after children have provided good opportunities for them to report their views to professionals and to meet other children in care.
69. Care ambassadors are regularly involved in foster carer training and in staff recruitment. They have regular and productive access to senior managers,

although links are less well-established with elected members. Looked after children are regularly seen by elected members, for example, through members' visits to children's homes and attendance at the Children and Families Advisory Panel. The potential of this innovative role would be realised more fully if these young people had routine formal opportunities to meet with elected members, and so to influence service planning. The local authority's pledge to looked after children and care leavers has been developed with the effective involvement of young people and, as a result, is an accurate representation of the issues that are important to them. Progress in meeting the pledge has been effectively monitored and actions put in place to make any necessary improvements. However not all looked after children are fully aware of all their entitlements or how to access them. Access to independent advocacy and use of independent visitors is limited, as acknowledged by the local authority. The new 'SPARK' website for looked after children and care leavers provides a sound platform to improve the local authority's communication and engagement with looked after children, although its impact is not yet evident.

70. Children's care plans are reviewed regularly. Independent reviewing officers (IROs) are challenging in their monitoring of care plans and place a strong emphasis on driving forward plans for children to avoid delay wherever possible. Review recommendations are specific and relevant to meet the changing needs of individual children. The quality of IROs' work is closely and effectively monitored by the lead IROs and the Independent Review Service (IRS) manager. However, despite some recent investment by the local authority in recruiting additional IROs, their caseloads are too high. This means they are unable to spend enough time speaking to children between review meetings to ensure that their emerging views are fully considered when planning for their futures.
71. IROs' identification and analysis of the issues facing looked after children, and their use of the robust dispute resolution process, enable senior managers to have a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the overall service and to take necessary actions for improvement. The annual IRS report to senior managers focuses appropriately on the needs of children as well as IRO activity, but this is not easily accessible to children and families, or the general public.

### **The graded judgment for adoption performance is outstanding**

72. Adoption is considered as an option for all children at the earliest possible opportunity. Adoption planning is given the highest priority by the local authority and this has resulted in a year on year increase in the number of children being placed for adoption over the last three years. The number of children adopted increased from 37 in 2011–12 to 62 in 2012–13. This figure has already been exceeded this year and the local authority's own data shows that 72 children have been placed for adoption in 2013–14. This work is underpinned by a robust adoption policy and a rigorous approach to adoption

training for social workers, including those in frontline referral and assessment teams. The needs of children with complex problems are recognised, and the deployment of a dedicated adoption social worker ensures that children with complex needs are placed for adoption where this is the plan.

73. The local authority set itself ambitious targets to increase the number of adoptive families over the last two years. It pursues all available options to match children through the use of consortia, adopter exchange days, Children Who Wait and the national Adoption Register. This work is supported by a dedicated team of adoption social workers who bring a sharp focus to recruitment. The team has been highly successful, and a well-targeted recruitment campaign has generated a significant increase in the number of adoption enquires year on year from 234 (2012–13) to 446 (December 2013). Fifty new adoptive households were recruited in 2012–13 with numbers for 2013–14 already exceeding this number by December 2013. Firm plans are in place to consolidate this performance in the future through a rolling programme of adoption recruitment.
74. The Adoption Improvement grant has been used effectively and the local authority has continued to invest in its own service to ensure performance is sustained. For example, it has appointed an additional 4.5 social workers to recruit and assess adopters to support the existing work of the adoption team and build capacity for the future.
75. Arrangements to monitor the progress of children who are subject to an adoption plan are robust. The progress made by individual children waiting for adoption is closely monitored and placement options are continuously explored. This has resulted in the very large majority of children with a plan for adoption being successfully placed. Eleven of the 20 children who have been waiting for adoption the longest have been successfully matched this year. Only eight children have been waiting for a family over a year, and these are continually monitored by managers to ensure that they are prioritised and placements actively sought. Where it becomes apparent that adoption is not achievable in a timescale that meets the child's needs, the local authority takes decisive action to secure alternative means of achieving a permanent home.
76. Performance on the Department for Education (DfE) adoption scorecard and the authority's own recent data (December 2013) shows that adoption performance exceeds that of comparable local authorities. For example, the average time between a child entering care and moving in with adopters is 558 days compared with 653 days for comparable authorities. The average time between the Placement Order being made and an adoptive home being agreed is 175 days compared with 201 days in comparable authorities. Despite the increase in demand for adoptive homes, the percentage of children who wait less than 21 months to live with adoptive parents is 58%, which is better than comparable authorities (51%).

77. Assessments of prospective adopters are thorough and of a very high standard, contributing to very effective matching and a low breakdown rate. The quality of child permanence reports is of a consistently high standard. These assessments use research very well to understand children's experiences and needs, for example, addressing issues such as the long term impact of domestic violence on children and the impact of placing and separating sibling groups. There are a number of examples where the service has worked with specialist adoption agencies to secure the best placement for siblings.
78. Post-adoption support is sharply focused on meeting the individual needs of adopters. It is readily available and highly effective, with 108 families currently benefiting from it. It is wide ranging and includes support groups, direct work with children and young people, specific training on therapeutic parenting strategies and activity days and events for adopted children. Adopters and prospective adopters report that they value it greatly. One adopter described support as "fantastic" and effective at times of crisis. It is making a demonstrable difference in children's lives by supporting and maintaining their adoptive families, and placement breakdown rates are low. Support to children who are adopted is good. Young people can access activity days and Youth Options residential activities which are helping to meet their needs.
79. Engagement with adopters is a strong feature of the adoption support service. The views of adopters and prospective adopters are used to influence the shape of services. This is effectively supported by the Adoption Participation Group for prospective adopters and adoptive parents. Their views have informed changes and led to improvements such as better information sessions, support on education issues and the introduction of a specialist training course on the impact of early trauma.

**The graded judgment for the experiences and progress of care leavers is good**

80. Care ambassadors have been influential in the development of the current pathway plans template, which now reflects how care leavers want their meetings conducted and recorded. Most pathway plans are of good quality and drawn up at the right time for the young person. Their content is primarily driven by care leavers, supported by their social workers or personal advisers. This practice reflects young people's growing independence and still allows for the identification and mitigation of specific risks such as sexual exploitation, offending and substance misuse. However, care leavers say they are not always clear what continuing support they are entitled to, for example in relation to accommodation, financial help and contact with their personal adviser.
81. Case notes and summaries are of good quality, enabling staff and managers to track care leavers' progress effectively. Line managers regularly review case summaries and case notes, and trigger reviews of pathway plans when there is a significant change in circumstances. Review notes are of good quality and are

written from the perspective of care leavers. This generates a sense of ownership by them.

82. The health needs of individual care leavers are routinely monitored and effectively promoted through their pathway plan. This enables continuing health care and, for those with particular or complex needs, supports transitions to adult health or social care services. Care leavers are encouraged and supported to live a healthy lifestyle and to attend routine dental checks, optician appointments and to undertake regular health assessments. Care leavers know and understand their health histories and how to access their health records when they leave care.
83. Care leavers' personal advisers are suitably trained and experienced in direct work with young people. The majority of care leavers benefit greatly from this support, which is further enhanced by the stability of the personal adviser workforce, enabling young people to build strong meaningful relationships with their assigned worker.
84. Good arrangements are in place at an early stage to assist care leavers to learn independent living skills such as managing their finances. Young people who spoke with inspectors said they have developed the social skills required to make choices, they can budget and can prepare healthy meals.
85. The local authority has been effective in supporting care leavers to enter employment, education or training (EET). At 63.8%, the proportion of care leavers in EET is good when measured against comparable local authorities and the national average. The local authority maintains a strong focus on increasing the life chances of care leavers. This commitment is seen in the Internship Plus programme which provides care leavers with a range of work opportunities and experiences. During 2013, 53 care leavers completed this programme, with half extending the experience to employment or full-time education. Feedback about it from young people is very positive, with one young person describing it as 'life changing'. This good level of investment in the future of care leavers is being developed and incorporated into the local authority's apprenticeship programme. Of the planned 1,000 places by 2016 for all young people, 150 placements will be allocated to care leavers.
86. All 13 care leavers who spoke with inspectors said that they feel safe where they live and know who to speak to if they are concerned about their own safety. They also say that firm plans are in place for their future, they know they can stay where they live beyond their 18th birthday if that is in their best interests, and they live in places that meet their needs well.
87. Despite this, a small minority of care leavers spend time living in bed and breakfast accommodation. These are young people who have either refused other more suitable accommodation, or have to wait a short while for an identified suitable placement to become available, or have exhausted other provision. The local authority minimises the adverse effects of this type of

accommodation through thorough case-by-case risk assessment, additional support and managerial oversight, but bed and breakfast is not suitable accommodation and does not provide a stable base from which to take part in employment, education or training. A revised accommodation strategy has been developed to tackle this problem, and new accommodation with intensive support for difficult to place care leavers is due to open imminently.

## **Leadership, management and governance are outstanding**

88. The local authority has a very strong and sustained track record of good performance in children's services. There is a well-established, experienced senior leadership team that is passionate about providing consistently high quality services. They are making a demonstrable difference to improving the life chances of children and young people. The Chief Executive, Director of Children's Services and other senior leaders are committed, well informed and strong proponents of the rights of vulnerable children and young people. They describe a vision, shared by elected members across the political spectrum, of strong and continually improving services. They understand very well the needs of Hampshire's population and have repeatedly taken the right steps to meet them by consolidating good performance and ensuring continued improvement.
89. The quality of services is consistently good overall and the adoption service is judged outstanding. Services for vulnerable children, young people and their families are given the highest priority by the local authority and this work is backed by the necessary financial resources as the local authority strives for excellence in the services it provides for vulnerable children and their families. This is supported by a clear strategy delivered by a stable senior leadership team that has been in place for over five years, knows the local authority very well and has repeatedly taken the right steps to consolidate good performance and continue improvement.
90. Senior leaders are highly ambitious and pioneering in developing and promoting effective approaches to improving services, practice and outcomes for children and young people. The local authority is frequently at the forefront of practice. They are currently a Special Educational Needs Pathfinder and although it is too early to evaluate impact yet, extensive consultation with parents and carers and good partnership work has helped to formulate new systems and approaches which are being trialled to provide a sound basis for future work. Inspectors saw examples of developments that have been recognised nationally as exemplars of good practice by the DfE. These include the joint working protocol on parents who have problems with mental health, substance misuse, learning disability and emotional or psychological distress. Other examples of exemplary services achieving excellent outcomes for children include EMTAS, the Young Interpreters scheme and the Dance Academy.
91. Links between the Chief Executive, the Director of Children's Services and the LSCB Independent Chair are strong, with regular meetings in place. The Chief Executive meets regularly with the LSCB Independent Chair and has sought assurance from her that lessons from SCRs and learning reviews are being properly learnt and disseminated in Hampshire.
92. Hampshire Children's Services has taken on responsibility for children's services in an inadequate local authority at the request of that authority and the DfE.



This was only taken on following a comprehensive assessment of risk arising from the proposal. It has not compromised performance in Hampshire. Indeed, inspectors saw evidence of learning from the experience being used to re-evaluate aspects of children's services in Hampshire. These include front line responses to contacts and referrals and the provision of professional development opportunities for middle and first line managers.

93. The Children and Young People Select Committee provides robust scrutiny of services for children and young people. Elected members on this committee have good insight and knowledge of their communities and the issues faced by children's services. The Health and Well Being Board is well established, with the right agencies represented at the right level. It has good links with the LSCB. The Lead Member for Children is the chair of the Health and Well Being Board and a participating observer of the LSCB. This contributes to a high degree of coherence between the different bodies involved in planning for children in Hampshire.
94. The Priorities set out in the children and young people plan (C&YPP) are drawn from the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA). High priority is given to children in vulnerable groups, including those who are disabled, have mental health problems, suffer from neglect or who are looked after. Targets set out in the C&YPP are being progressed effectively and reported to the Children's Trust Board, which ensures commissioned children and family services are well targeted and coordinated across the partnership. Strategic plans are effectively linked. For example, the development of the early help offer and promotion of the needs of disabled children are key priorities in both the LSCB business plan and the C&YPP. The impact of this work has been significant in improving outcomes for children, for example through the targeting of early help where it is needed most.
95. Children's trust arrangements are given high priority in the authority and planning is robust and targeted at the most vulnerable children and young people. The resulting partnership work has led to some very positive outcomes for children. For example, targeted work on reducing teenage pregnancies has led to a 41% reduction in teenage conception rates since the baseline in 1998. The reconfiguration of CAMHS has improved the timeliness of assessment and treatment and addressed the previous inequality of services across the local authority area. Effective partnership work and use of the Public Law Outline have led to rapid improvements in timescales for the completion of care proceedings.
96. Commissioning arrangements are robust, with careful attention given to the planning of service development. Senior and middle managers progress plans incrementally and in a measured way. Examples of this are trials of the MASH in the autumn and the staged launch of the early help hubs during 2014. Very good partnership arrangements with the police and health agencies are in place. This has led to highly effective planning and the use of pooled budgets, for example to support transitions for disabled children. This work is effectively

managed through the Joint Children's Health Commissioning Board which is located within the Children's Trust board arrangements. Parents and young people are very well engaged and make an invaluable contribution to the commissioning and development of services, for example through membership of Local Grant Allocation panels.

97. Effective planning, access to good quality training and a strong focus on innovation have led to the local authority maintaining an exceptionally stable workforce of good, qualified, experienced social workers and children and family support workers. There is a very low rate of vacant posts and where vacancies arise, locum social workers are employed so that staffing levels are maintained. This provides a sound basis for work with families. Strong partnerships are in place to develop a range of pathways to social work to ensure a sufficient, qualified workforce is in place in the future. This includes support for unqualified staff to obtain a social work qualification and participation in the Step up to Social Work scheme, which has been commended by the Health and Care Professional Council (HCPC) for its work in this field.
98. Senior and middle managers demonstrate a very strong focus on learning and promoting service development from examples of good practice identified in other authorities across the country. The local authority is active in supporting challenge and service development through its involvement in sector-led improvement work such as peer review, and in national initiatives such as the Family Justice and Adoption reforms. Such work has contributed to service improvements in key areas, such as reduced timescales for court proceedings and strong progress made in the adoption service, with a year on year increase in the number of children placed for adoption and better performance than comparable local authorities
99. Senior managers know and understand the different needs of the communities of Hampshire. They respond quickly to changing demands for services. There are many examples where decisive action has been taken to bring further improvement to services that are already good. Where inspectors found shortcomings in practice, or quality has slipped, the local authority was already aware of the issues and had plans in place to address them. For example, in the size of caseloads for some newly qualified social workers, delays in some children in need being seen after referral, and a small number of young people placed in inappropriate accommodation.
100. The local authority knows itself well through good performance management and reporting arrangements, coordinated through the County Children and Family Management team (CFMT). There is very rigorous routine scrutiny of detailed performance management information. This enables swift and decisive action to be taken to ensure that quality is maintained and improved, providing a very sound basis for management decision-making. Case file audit arrangements are comprehensive and robust. This ensures that work is closely

overseen by managers at different levels, and leads to robust action to improve social work practice.

101. Highly effective arrangements are in place to learn from a range of sources to improve services and practice. This includes critical issues identified by the LSCB and opportunities to learn from serious incidents. For example, each of the four serious incident notifications made in the last year has led to the instigation of a SCR so that lessons can be learnt. Social workers are consistently able to give examples of a range of methods used to share lessons learnt from SCRs and learning reviews and to describe how it has influenced their practice. Learning from complaints has been incorporated into training for managers. Information gathered from the annual staff survey has been used effectively to identify areas for development such as awareness of the whistle-blowing policy and employee support scheme, with subsequent surveys showing improvement.
102. Corporate parenting arrangements are very strong, with elected members actively promoting high aspirations for children in the local authority's care. The achievements of looked after children and care leavers are celebrated at an annual awards ceremony. Lead members and senior officers describe children in the local authority's care as part of the 'Hampshire family' and this area of work is supported by significant investment, which has underpinned the development of the Intern Plus scheme, new residential service provision, and the Staying Put initiative. These schemes have had a discernible impact on young people's confidence, personal development and life chances.

## 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

### The effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board is good

#### Areas for improvement

103. Evaluate the learning and impact of training delivered across the partnership to ensure that all staff have access to good quality training, and that this leads to sustained improvements across all safeguarding and early help services.
104. Ensure that data collection from all key partners is incorporated into the balanced scorecard and used by the LSCB to monitor practice and service delivery of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements across the partnership.

#### Key strengths and weaknesses of the Local Safeguarding Children Board

105. Governance arrangements between the LSCB and the local authority are effective. The LSCB Independent Chair regularly meets with the Director of Children's Services, Chief Executive of the authority and Lead Member to ensure that the local authority is fulfilling its safeguarding responsibilities. There are strong links between the LSCB and the Health and Wellbeing Board and Children's Trust. These ensure that there is a strong and sustained focus to promote effective safeguarding arrangements across the county.
106. The LSCB is led effectively by an independent chair who is rigorous in her approach to ensuring that all the requirements set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (DfE 2013) are met. The LSCB has made very good progress since her arrival. It receives continuing and active support from local political leaders who retain a clear, strong focus on safeguarding service delivery across the partnership. These factors combine to bring continual improvement in the way the Board coordinates and ensures the effectiveness of multi-agency responses to meet the needs of children and families. The LSCB has established clear priorities in the current business plan to improve safeguarding practice. It regularly reviews progress and takes decisive and prompt action where necessary in order to meet objectives. These initiatives have resulted in more robust arrangements to protect children in Hampshire, such as in the improved practice to safeguard children with a disability.
107. The LSCB ensures that multi-agency policies and procedures are fit for purpose, reviewed thoroughly and updated as required to incorporate statutory requirements and changes to practice. For example, it has led the review of the local inter-agency thresholds document in response to the early help agenda, so partner agencies are clear about their own roles and those of other partners in early help and the protection of children and families.
108. The LSCB Annual Report (2013) provides a rigorous assessment and overview of key service strengths and weaknesses across safeguarding services in

Hampshire. It provides a clear focus to shape strategy, policy and practice across the partnership, including service responses for domestic violence, child sexual exploitation (CSE), child trafficking and the involvement of children and families in influencing the shape of services across the area. For example the Board recognised that social work assessments did not focus sufficiently on fathers and, as a result, more robust and comprehensive assessments are now routinely undertaken.

109. Partnership work is effective. All key partners are well engaged and make a full and active contribution to improving the delivery of services for children and young people. For example, the LSCB has worked closely with the local authority to strengthen support arrangements to provide schools, including those in the independent sector, with systematic information and guidance on safeguarding.
110. The independent chair has ensured that a culture of scrutiny and challenge operates effectively across the partnership, with activities including Section 11 audits, case reviews and action plans arising from SCRs. The LSCB maintains a risk register to record risks to its ability to achieve its objectives. It also uses a challenge log to document challenges made over partner agencies' performance in critical areas of their business. This enables the effective monitoring of progress made by partners in overcoming difficulties and improving performance. For example, the responses to challenges on high social work caseloads in one area, and a lack of suitable accommodation for children detained under Section 136 of the Mental Health Act 2005, have been monitored and improvements recognised.
111. The LSCB receives a comprehensive range of monitoring reports in relation to the performance of frontline early help and social care services. These reports enable further investigation and challenge. For example, the LSCB has influenced and endorsed the redesign of the early help offer to families in Hampshire. The Quality Assurance subgroup and local multi-agency safeguarding forums assess the continuing impact of implementation at a local level. A review of services for children with disabilities who are subject of a child protection plan has resulted in improved decision-making and more effective management oversight. The LSCB has also implemented a tracking process to identify any cumulative patterns arising from concerns reported by schools and other settings across Hampshire.
112. The LSCB has recently introduced a multi-agency balanced scorecard to monitor and evaluate performance on safeguarding indicators across the partnership. While scrutiny and analysis of the data are in their infancy, there is evidence of early impact and improved practice in some areas as a result of this work. However, to date not all key partners have contributed effectively to this scorecard and, although this will be remedied shortly, scrutiny to date has been limited.

113. SCRs and learning reviews are initiated appropriately and learning from these, as well as SCRs from other LSCBs and relevant research, is well established. The LSCB is instrumental in ensuring that partners understand the impact of these lessons, and holds them to account for the dissemination and evaluation of learning. Effective arrangements for the review of child deaths are in place. The Child Death Overview Panel comprises appropriate professionals, is well attended and has clear terms of reference for work undertaken. Regular reports are made to the LSCB. These identify issues of concern and learning from child deaths, and are used effectively, for example to raise public awareness of the dangers posed to babies from sharing a bed with parents.
114. A strong focus on child sexual exploitation is maintained by the LSCB to steer and monitor the implementation of agreed policies and procedures by partner agencies. This has ensured that this vulnerable group of children is safeguarded effectively. The LSCB subgroup for missing, exploited and trafficked children provides an energetic and committed multi-agency approach that drives local responses to the identification and support of children identified as missing or at risk of sexual exploitation. Voluntary organisations are well engaged in this group, and this collaborative approach ensures that the CSE pathways and protocols are well understood and implemented across the partnership.
115. The LSCB's Learning and Improvement Framework supports partner agencies to identify and address the safeguarding training needs of their workforce. The LSCB is committed to commissioning and funding multi-agency safeguarding training. This results in comprehensive pathways to training. The LSCB undertakes a comprehensive programme of audit activity. This has been recently strengthened by a review of the three multi-agency safeguarding forums to ensure that there is a consistent thread from senior management and the LSCB Independent Chair to frontline staff. This has facilitated clearer communication and resulted in timely and accurate dissemination of key messages, learning and further scrutiny of performance. While the quality and impact of audits has been variable in the past, more recent activity has resulted in sustained and well-targeted improvements across early help and safeguarding services.

## 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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