

Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services

Ealing

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Reporting inspector: Richard Nash HMI

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Contents

About this inspection	2
The inspection judgements and what they mean	2
Service information	3
Safeguarding services	5
Overall effectiveness	5
Capacity for improvement	6
Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people	8
Children and young people are safe and feel safe	8
Quality of provision	10
The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe	10
Ambition and prioritisation	18
Leadership and management	19
Performance management and quality assurance	20
Partnership working	21
Services for looked after children	23
Overall effectiveness	23
Capacity for improvement	23
How good are outcomes for looked after children and care leavers?	25
Being healthy	25
Staying safe	26
Enjoying and achieving	28
Making a positive contribution, including user engagement	30
Economic well-being	31
Quality of provision	33
Ambition and prioritisation	35
Leadership and management	37
Performance management and quality assurance	39
Record of main findings	41

About this inspection

1. The purpose of the inspection is to evaluate the contribution made by relevant services in the local area towards ensuring that children and young people are properly safeguarded and to determine the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers. The inspection team consisted of three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one inspector from the Care Quality Commission. The inspection was carried out under the Children Act 2004.
2. The evidence evaluated by inspectors included:
 - discussions with children and young people receiving services, front line managers, senior officers including the Director of Children's Services and the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, elected members and a range of community representatives
 - analysing and evaluating reports from a variety of sources including a review of the Children and Young People's Plan, performance data, information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day care provision and the evaluation of a serious case review undertaken by Ofsted in accordance *with 'Working Together To Safeguard Children', 2010*
 - a review of 37 case files for children and young people with a range of need. This provided a view of services provided over time and the quality of reporting, recording and decision making undertaken
 - the outcomes of the most recent annual unannounced inspection of local authority contact, referral and assessment services undertaken in November 2010
 - interviews and focus groups with front line professionals, managers and senior staff from Ealing Hospitals NHS Trust, West London Mental Health NHS Trust, Ealing Community Health Services and Ealing NHS Primary Care Trust.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

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

Outstanding (Grade 1)	A service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements
Good (Grade 2)	A service that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate (Grade 3)	A service that only meets minimum requirements
Inadequate (Grade 4)	A service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

4. The London Borough of Ealing has a resident population of approximately 80,074 children and young people aged 0 to 18, representing 25% of the total population of the area. In January 2011, 81% of the school population was classified as belonging to an ethnic group other than White British compared to 22.5% in England overall. Fifty seven percent of pupils speak English as an additional language. Somali and Punjabi are the most recorded commonly spoken community languages in the area.
5. Ealing has 84 schools comprising 65 primary schools, 12 secondary schools, one academy, and eight special and short stay schools including a study centre. Early years service provision is delivered predominantly through the private and voluntary sector in over 119 settings; there are four local authority maintained nurseries.
6. Ealing's Children's Trust was established in July 2009. In February 2011, the Children's Trust was revised and reconstituted as the Children and Young People's Board (CYPB). It remains a key second tier partnership board reporting to the Local Strategic Partnership. The board is chaired by the Lead Member for children and young people and includes representatives of Ealing Council and Ealing Primary Care Trust (PCT). The Board also includes representatives of the Metropolitan Police, probation, education, the voluntary sector, other health providers, general practitioners (GPs) and local schools and colleges. The Ealing Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) became independently chaired in May 2009, bringing together the main organisations working with children, young people and families in the area that provide safeguarding services. Social care services for children have 93 foster carers, two children's homes and a comprehensive range of externally commissioned services, including residential, fostering, leaving care and support services. Area based children's services are provided by two referral and assessment teams, five Children and Family teams supported by borough-wide teams for children's hospital social care team, family support, children with a disability, youth offending, adoption, fostering and two teams for looked after children and young people leaving care. There is a borough wide early intervention service (SAFE 0-12 and SAFE Adolescent). There is an emergency out of hours service. Other family support services are delivered through 25 children's centres and extended services in schools. Some services are provided or coordinated through children's services such as youth services, teenage pregnancy, Connexions, sexual health services, integrated support for children with additional needs, the play service and the family information service.

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7. At the time of the inspection there were 384 looked after children. They comprise 76 children less than five years of age, 202 children of school age (5 – 16) and 106 post-16 young people. In addition there are a total of 110 with care leaver status and 241 care leavers aged 18 and over in Ealing. Ealing uses a virtual school approach in its support of the learning of looked after children. At the time of the inspection there were 276 children who were the subject of a child protection plan. This is a decrease over the previous two years. These comprise 133 females and 139 males (four were unborn children). Some 34.4% of these children are aged under 5, 43.1% are 5 – 11 and 21.0% are 12 years or older. The highest categories of registration were neglect at 44.6% and emotional abuse at 49.3%, physical abuse at 5.4% and sexual abuse at 0.7%.
 8. Commissioning and planning of health services and primary care are carried out by NHS Ealing. The main provider of acute hospital services is Ealing Hospital NHS Trust. Community-based Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are provided by West London Mental Health NHS Trust. In patient CAMHS is provided by a range of independent providers. Community health services are provided by Ealing Hospital NHS Trust.

Safeguarding services

Overall effectiveness

Grade 2 (good)

9. The overall effectiveness of safeguarding services in Ealing is good. The strategic leadership of the council and its partners ensure that safeguarding is given the highest priority. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and strategic partnerships with health, education and voluntary services have a strong track record of effective multi-agency work. There has been significant and sustained improvement in safeguarding services underpinned by good quality management information, audit and challenge. Well established joint commissioning and pooled budgets have enabled the creation of a range of early intervention and preventative services that are highly effective in reducing the number of children and young people in need of statutory services. Child protection work is completed by qualified and suitably experienced social workers who are well supported by competent and accessible line managers. A successful and ongoing recruitment and selection strategy is increasing the stability and skill base of the workforce. There are sufficient qualified social workers to undertake all children in need work as well as initial and core assessments.

10. The council has taken appropriate action since the unannounced inspection of the contact, referral and assessment arrangements to ensure all identified areas for development are being effectively responded to. There has been significant improvement in the quality of assessments and casework across the service. Children and young people at immediate risk of significant harm are identified and responded to in a timely way to ensure that they are safe. All social work teams have made incremental improvements in their practice driven by strong audit and performance management strategies. The Children with Disability Team is the least well developed social work team and still has some improvements to make, particularly in relation to child in need work. Senior managers had already identified the need for improvement within the Children with Disability Team and had clear evidence of the steps already taken to progress matters. During the inspection inspectors identified some section 17 cases where there were delays in responding to changing family pressures, which, if not checked, could lead to children being at risk of harm. These cases were the exception however and the vast majority of casework was of a high standard. The views of children, young people and their parents and carers are consistently sought and used effectively by the council to monitor service delivery and plan service improvements. Children and young people consistently told inspectors that in their view the services that they receive make a positive difference and that they feel listened to by the council.

Capacity for improvement**Grade 1 (outstanding)**

11. The capacity for improvement is outstanding. The local authority with its partners has a track record of delivering sustained and high quality improvements to services that result in improved outcomes for children. Multi-agency early intervention services, financed by pooled resources, have reduced referrals to statutory social work teams, against national trends, and are a strong indicator of excellent performance. Thresholds are appropriately applied and feedback from service users indicates that early intervention and prevention work is well targeted and effective. The ESCB commissioned the London Safeguarding Children's Board in June 2010 to audit child protection work which assisted the council in making improvements to their service delivery. The local authority made the decision to request an external body to audit this work when the number of children subject to a child protection plan was the highest across London. Significant progress has now been made and currently the number of children subject to child protection plans is in line with statistical neighbours. The last inspection of the contact, referral and assessment services in November 2010 did not identify any areas for priority action and the council has responded swiftly and effectively in addressing the five identified areas for development.
12. The council makes good use of audit processes and has developed a clear understanding of its own strengths and areas that require further development. Since 2009 there has been increasingly effective progress in driving up standards and improving outcomes for children. The ESCB has succeeded in delivering an ambitious improvement plan based upon learning from serious case reviews and self audits across health, education and children's social care. These include piloting reflective supervision for GP's, embedding reflective supervision in practice for key safeguarding teaching staff and across social care. In addition, standards of knowledge and practice in relation to domestic violence together with the creation of key advisor posts have significantly improved outcomes. A continuous learning culture has been developed and a Safeguarding Improvement Plan is effectively used as a working document to measure and monitor continuous improvements in service delivery.
13. The council has taken decisive and effective action to ensure that social worker's caseloads remain manageable and allow effective work with children and young people to take place. Senior managers responded to social workers' concerns about high caseloads and successfully recommended to elected members that extra resources be provided to increase the number of social work posts during 2009/10. In November 2010 further funds were secured by senior managers to improve the retention of social workers by paying a retention bonus. It is clear both of these initiatives have been very successful and are highly commendable in the current economic climate.

Areas for improvement

14. In order to improve the quality of provision and services for safeguarding children and young people in Ealing, the local authority and its partners should take the following action.

Within three months:

- Complete the audit of Child in Need cases within the Children with Disability service and update the Safeguarding Improvement Plan with timely and measurable actions to improve service delivery.
- Review the capacity of the Emergency Duty Team to ensure that service delivery can be maintained while current increases in demand remain.
- Ealing PCT to support GPs in adopting a common approach to identifying children who have a child protection plan in place and those children and young people who are looked after.
- The Partnership should finalise and implement the peri-natal mental health pathway for pregnant women and develop the teenage pregnancy pathway and monitor its effectiveness.
- West London Mental Health NHS Trust should develop formal referral pathways to partner agencies to ensure that signposting of inappropriate referrals to CAMHS are made in an efficient and effective way.
- Ensure that the child or young person's needs as defined by their race, culture, ethnicity, language and religion are fully considered as part of each assessment and intervention plan.
- Ensure that Human Resources recruitment files include confirmation that reference checks and recruitment history checks have been carried out, and that recruitment panels routinely include managers who have completed safer recruitment training.

Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people

Children and young people are safe and feel safe

Grade 2 (good)

15. The effectiveness of services in taking reasonable steps to ensure that children and young people are safe is good. The inspection of the adoption service by Ofsted in October 2008 judged the service to be good. The Ofsted inspection of the fostering service in March 2008 judged the service to be outstanding and the private fostering arrangements inspected by Ofsted in 2009 were judged good. Ealing has two residential children's homes and both were judged good at their last Ofsted inspection.
16. Children and young people at immediate risk of significant harm are identified and responded to in a timely way to ensure they are appropriately protected. High quality social work practice is well established in terms of ensuring children and young people are seen, spoken to and that their views are captured when assessing their needs. Consequently assessments are better informed in terms of risk and their views are effectively used to shape future service development. There are examples of highly effective practice to engage with families on the edge of care. Early intervention teams deliver sharply focused programmes to meet individual needs and prevent family breakdown. As preventative services have become established the number of children and young people referred to statutory social work services has reduced. Parents who spoke with inspectors said early intervention workers are very good at providing the support they want, that their children and young people are enabled to engage with the services offered and this is leading to improved outcomes. There is good multi-agency working and information sharing in relation to children and young people missing from education and care. Policy and processes for the identification, tracking and support of children and young people are well established. The missing children procedure has been reviewed recently and disseminated across the safeguarding partnership. Detailed analysis of this work has been undertaken to assist the 2010 ESCB annual report and lessons learned are being incorporated into an action plan to improve the service further.
17. The examination of case files identified that there is a strong focus on ensuring the individual needs of children are met. However, in a small minority of cases it was not always clear, from assessments, how equality and diversity issues have helped shape children's plans. The standard of recording was generally of a high quality on the cases seen by inspectors. Case files were up to date, assessments available and completed and manager's oversight and supervision clearly evident. Although the implementation of the common assessment framework (CAF) has been

slow there has not, as yet, been a significant impact upon the outcomes for children in need of early intervention services or assessment. The need to improve the use of CAF has been recognised by the local authority and its partners. The partnership has been building capacity in its early intervention and prevention services and the rate of CAF assessments completed by partner agencies has doubled in the last 12 months.

18. Cases examined by inspectors identified that investigation processes are robust and reflective of policy and procedures. Statutory guidelines in relation to responding to complaints are consistently applied. Robust processes are in place for collating and analysing complaints. Quarterly reports are completed and made available to senior managers including the local authority designated officer (LADO) detailing numbers of complaints, outcomes and trends. The safeguarding process led by the LADO is effective with particularly good arrangements to ensure agencies are encouraged to report any concerns that relate to members of the children's workforce and their interaction with children and young people. The safeguarding lead for education provides an effective link between schools and the LADO and offers appropriate advice to assist managers in schools to make informed decisions. The LSCB annual report dated March 2011 identified that there have been a total of 86 referrals regarding allegations against professionals in the year up to March 2010. There is good analysis of referrals leading to action points to develop services further such as in the faith sector. However the LADO annual report is not comprehensive and does not include the number of referrals made to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). In addition, the final strategy meeting held in respect of concerns about members of the children's workforce does not ascertain that referrals to the ISA have been made. Safer recruitment arrangements meet statutory requirements. A revised policy for recruitment and selection was launched in January 2010 and safer recruitment training is actively promoted across the Trust. Three-yearly repeat CRB checks are undertaken for staff where appropriate, and there are robust reporting mechanisms to identify staff whose CRB is not in place. Staff records are generally comprehensive and in most cases complete. However, they do not always include confirmation that checks on recruitment history and references have taken place.
19. There is a well established Youth Offending Service (YOS) with a wide range of early intervention and preventative services for young people at risk of offending supported by effective multi-agency partnership working. The rate of children who enter the criminal justice system for the first time is lower than similar councils. Performance on reducing the number of first time offenders has been consistently above national and local comparators in recent years and this is supported by reoffending rates which are declining. There is also a strong focus on engaging young offenders in education, training and employment. Performance in this area is very good with 92% of children and young people known to YOS attending education, training or employment. Young people involved in these

programmes who spoke with inspectors said they enjoy the learning opportunities provided, understand the importance of completing their education and were proud of their successes.

20. Overall, schools' performance on safeguarding is very good. Staying safe outcomes are judged good or better in all schools inspected since September 2009. Almost all schools have achieved healthy school status, and most primary schools have well developed social and emotional development programmes. Effective work has been carried out in schools on a range of safeguarding and personal safety issues including: bullying; cyber bullying; stranger danger; sexual health; and drug and alcohol awareness. Mentoring and 'buddy' systems are put to good use in schools to ensure that children can share their problems and build self-esteem. There is a strong focus on ensuring children attend school. The 2010 performance data shows that overall absence, unauthorised absence and persistent absence rates are low and better than the national average for both primary and secondary school children in Ealing. Fixed term exclusions from secondary schools have reduced every year since 2008. There have been no permanent exclusions from Ealing primary schools since 2007 and the number of permanent exclusions from secondary schools is declining, with performance better than the national average. Although the LA health related behaviour survey identifies the views of children on bullying in primary and secondary schools it does not sufficiently capture all information on children who have experienced bullying. However children who attend secondary schools who responded to the local authority survey in 2009 (Tellus 4) reported that they experience less bullying than the national average. Children spoken to by inspectors report that they feel safe in school and the local area, but raised some concerns regarding safety outside of schools and on public transport. These concerns have been discussed in school council meetings and the partnership has responded positively by ensuring that there are Safer School Police Officers attached to every secondary school in Ealing. Children and young people report that they value this initiative and this helps address some of their anxieties around feeling safe in the community.

Quality of provision

Grade 2 (good)

21. The quality of provision is good. Thresholds for access to children's social care services are well established across the partnership and referrals are being made appropriately. There are many examples of highly effective practice within the service. The specialist domestic violence worker, for example, provides a focal point for advice and direct practice support to professionals from across the partnership to ensure that responses to domestic violence across the partnership remain consistently effective. Social workers who spoke to inspectors stated that having this type of

resource is highly valued. The council have judged the post to be highly effective and have recently increased capacity through the appointment of an additional three domestic violence workers in the SAFE teams.

Although there are a wide range of services to support and assist victims of domestic violence the services to perpetrators remain under developed.

The capacity of early intervention and prevention services has increased and services are increasingly effective at ensuring children do not enter the child protection system unnecessarily. Front line teams operate practice which is consistent with the published threshold for access to child protection services and this is applied consistently across the two intake teams. All referrals to children's social care are allocated promptly and all casework is carried out by qualified and suitably experienced social workers. Social workers who spoke with inspectors report that their case loads are always manageable and that they are well supported by their managers in all aspects of their work.

22. Relationships between the police and children's social care are well developed and they provide a sound basis for child protection work. The police attend all initial child protection conferences and the majority of child protection review conferences and they consistently provide written information to all conferences. The work of the public protection unit is effective. Referrals are prioritised and urgent cases are responded to within 24 hours. The police ensure information is properly researched in connection with all family members and there are good arrangements for police notifications (MERLINS) to inform partner agencies. However, the police report that on some occasions they experience difficulties in making contact with colleagues in children's services and that this can delay casework decisions. In addition, the police are aware that some schools do not make child protection referrals in a timely way which can increase the difficulties in safeguarding and protecting vulnerable children.

23. Inspectors saw some examples of good quality team around the child (TAC) family interventions although the universal take up of CAF has been slow. CAF is not yet used to routinely identify the support needs of children before they enter the child protection system and when statutory social care services are no longer required. There has been a rapid improvement in reducing the high rate of referrals and re-referrals to children social care. Consistently high rates of children who are referred go on to receive an assessment which helps to ensure services are appropriately targeted. Overall, information provided by referrers is good. Good practice ensures that referrers are always consulted and informed of the outcome of their referral. Health and education professionals who spoke with inspectors report that they have good access to qualified social workers to discuss safeguarding concerns through the consultation service provided by the child protection chairs and the education lead officer for safeguarding. Managers are involved from an early stage and decisions are signed off clearly. Where urgent action is needed, responses are

prompt to ensure the most vulnerable children who need protection are safe.

24. There is an effective emergency duty service which is staffed by experienced, qualified social workers. There is good communication with area teams to ensure continuity of service. However, staff report that they are working long hours to ensure the demand for service is met. Managers have taken swift action to tackle poor performance on the rate of initial child protection case conferences completed within 15 days of the final strategy meeting by building capacity including a dedicated manager. Performance in this area is now better than similar councils and the national average. Parents of children in receipt of child protection services reported to inspectors that good progress has been made against their child protection plans although initial contacts with social workers can create conflict and a sense of not being listened to. Parents and carers are clear that team managers are actively involved in resolving any issues that they have and this is highly valued. Parents of children in receipt of child in need services report that their needs are identified early, that they have been involved in their assessments, made good progress against their plans and are highly satisfied with the service they have received.
25. The council has taken swift action since the unannounced inspection to consolidate policy procedure and practice as part of the safeguarding improvement plan. All cases are regularly screened and prioritised by team managers. Examination of recent case files demonstrate they are sharply focused on risk, preventative factors and what needs to change. Case decisions are clearly recorded and signed off by managers. Overall the quality of initial and core assessments seen by inspectors were good. Analysis of recent assessments consistently demonstrated that children were seen and where appropriate spoken to alone. Their views are consistently recorded and considered in the analysis of each assessment. Assessments include a robust analysis of risk and protective factors and what action needs to be taken to ensure children are safe or to ensure they are protected. Although there are examples in a small number of cases where assessments are not being shared with parents this practice has improved. There is good use of written agreements with families where there are immediate child protection concerns, which clearly outline expectations and requirements. Most parents who spoke with inspectors report that they receive copies of their assessments and are well informed about their plans and progress. Although children's involvement in their assessments has in the past been variable scrutiny of recent assessments demonstrates this has improved and practice is embedded. Scrutiny of case files confirmed that the right children are being referred and a high proportion go on to receive an assessment of their needs. Although a high rate of children were subject to a child protection plan this has reduced rapidly from 378 to 281 over the last 12 months as early intervention and prevention services are being used increasingly to safely reduce risk.

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26. Plans to involve service users in developing referral and assessment services are increasingly part of service redesign and there are some examples of user views helping to shape services such as in the Youth Offending Service (YOS) and family intervention programme.
 27. Scrutiny of case files highlighted that overall once children enter the child protection service cases are managed very well. However there are a small number of examples where assessments have led to conflict with parents and carers which has detracted from the focus on the child or young person and hindered the pace of positive change. Core group meetings are held on time and are well attended by agencies. Although statutory visits take place they are not always within the timescale expected by the council. Although the recording of ethnicity, language and religion is evident in most cases it is not always clear how this impacts on individual children's assessments.
 28. Local authority procedure and practice in the auditing of front line child protection work is well embedded and leading to sustained improvement in the quality of assessments and direct work with families. The most recent local authority management data shows the number of children subject to a child protection plan has decreased significantly over the last 12 months and there has been rapid improvement in reducing the rate of children on a plan for longer than two years which is now in line with similar councils. The integrated children's recording system is used effectively and as a result case recording in nearly all cases seen by inspectors is rigorous and robust. This provides a sound basis for children's social care child protection work. Significant progress has been made in the quality of case file recording in specific areas such as chronologies, case recordings, case plan reviews, interagency cooperation, workload allocation and case transfer. Social workers who spoke with inspectors knew and understood the value of good quality record keeping and gave a high priority to this area of their work. The arrangements for staff supervision are well established and social workers who spoke with inspectors said they receive supervision regularly and that this is helping them to meet the needs of children and families.
 29. There are good examples of advocacy support for children and their parents where English is a second language. Parents from ethnic minority groups who spoke with inspectors, including those who were supported by a translator, report that children in need services are highly effective. They are fully involved in their assessments, know and understand what they need to do to progress their plans and have received written information to support this work.

The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe Grade 2 (good)

30. The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe is good. Children and young people benefit from strong relationships between health partners and the children and families team. There is evidence of close working across agencies and across staff groups throughout early intervention services and in child protection work. Health partners are well represented on the LSCB and regularly attend. In addition, health partners have very recently established new governance structures in response to recent changes to the local NHS. The new structures will provide the trust boards with assurance about the arrangements to safeguard children within their organisation; however the changes are too recent to comment on their impact. There is good use of key performance indicators to influence and monitor safeguarding practice within the Ealing community services and acute services provided by Ealing Hospitals NHS Trust. However, the West London Mental Health NHS Trust's Board has a minimal safeguarding data set as part of the trust's integrated performance report that cannot provide robust board assurance. The trust has previously recognised this and there are plans to introduce a more comprehensive quality assurance framework during 2011/12.
31. Supervision of health professionals in safeguarding children remains variable. There is good supervision in the Ealing Community Health Services, now provided by Ealing Hospitals NHS Trust, with all health visiting and school nursing teams receiving a minimum of quarterly sessions by qualified staff. The acute services provided by Ealing Hospitals NHS Trust and the West London Mental Health NHS Trust are in the final stages of drafting and implementation of their safeguarding children supervision policies. There are adequate arrangements in place for the designated nurse for safeguarding children and designated doctor for safeguarding children as the PCT moves into the North West London outer sub cluster as part of national reorganisation. The post of named GP remains vacant despite continued efforts to recruit to the position. The named safeguarding children professionals for the integrated care organisations, Ealing Hospitals NHS Trust and the West London Mental Health NHS Trust, are appropriately line managed and well supported with good and effective access to the trust executive board's lead for safeguarding children. However, the named midwife does not have a job description for the role and the role of lead anaesthetist for child protection/safeguarding has not yet been formalised within the Ealing Hospital Trust.
32. Progress in ensuring all health staff receive safeguarding children training is good, with good take up reported within the acute services provided by Ealing Hospitals NHS Trust and West London Mental Health NHS Trust. Ealing community services have carried out detailed training needs

analyses and are preparing their training plans for 2011/12. There is good progress being made to deliver training for general practitioners and dentists in safeguarding children. The PCT offers good support to primary care. The PCT are piloting GP safeguarding children supervision. The project will be formally evaluated after one year. However early indications are positive with increasing numbers of GPs electing to join the programme. There is not a standardised approach by GP's to recording either in relation to whether a child has a child protection plan in place or the status of a child who is looked after. Most of the GP practices had a system for recording some of this information but this is not consistent across the PCT.

33. The health visiting and school nursing services provided by Ealing community services are adequate. The healthy child programme is delivered through integrated teams and there has been good progress made in ensuring all new birth visits to mothers are carried out within recommended timescales. A check on all children aged two and a half years old has been introduced this year. However the impact of this additional service cannot be evaluated yet. There are adequate arrangements in place to transfer children from the health visiting service to the school nursing service. There is evidence of skill mix being used effectively to support families as part of child protection plans, and in early intervention work including CAF and TAC.
34. The arrangements in place to safeguard children and young people who attend A&E at Ealing Hospital are good. Checks are made to establish any pattern of repeat attendance or whether a child or young person has a child protection plan in place. There is good paediatric liaison through the paediatric liaison health visitor (PLHV). The PLHV reviews all attendances at A&E by a child or young person. As part of the review, she will consider the appropriateness of any safeguarding action taken and where necessary follow this up with A&E staff and the health visitor or school nurse. There is good use made of the multi-agency, multi-disciplinary safety net meetings where a selection of cases are discussed to highlight good safeguarding children practice or to explore how opportunities were missed. Currently, CAMHS are not represented at the safety net meetings.
35. There are established care pathways in place to support young people who attend A&E who require CAMHS following an incident of self harm, substance misuse or who are in mental health crises. Any young person under 16 who has attended the unit through self harm or substance misuse is automatically admitted to the paediatric assessment unit for assessment by the CAMHS Paediatric Liaison Team. However, the arrangements for young people age 16 to 18 attending out of hours are less clear and there can be significant delays in obtaining assistance through the adult on call psychiatric team with young people sometimes waiting for excessively long periods of time.

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36. There is good partnership working to ensure that where possible families are protected from domestic violence. Health partners are well represented on the local multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC). Staff at Ealing Hospital A&E demonstrate good awareness of the impact of domestic violence on children and there is a clear referral process to the social care children assessment team. Young people have good access to drug and alcohol services. The substance misuse teams working as part of the SAFE adolescent team and the EASY project offer advice, support and treatment for young people who misuse drugs and alcohol. The SAFE adolescent team and EASY project provides advice and training to universal services as well as offering support to parents and carers.
37. The provision of sex and relationship education (SRE) and contraceptive and sexual health services (CASH) are adequate. There is access to CASH clinics five days a week and access to emergency contraception seven days a week. There are a limited number of women-only sessions at family planning and young people's clinics and there are no male only clinics. There are, however, combined male and female young person clinics at the GUM in Ealing Hospital and there are two young fathers' workers who are trained in sexual health services and can signpost to the most appropriate provision. Young people with disabilities have good access to help and advice around sexual health and relationships. The partnership has commissioned Image in Action to provide this targeted service and feedback from staff in the focus group was positive.
38. The arrangements to safeguard the unborn child are effective. Midwives carry out a comprehensive screening of all pregnant women to identify any vulnerability and will refer on to appropriate agencies for additional support where necessary, including the family nurse partnership. The perinatal mental health pathway is still in development and has not yet been shared across all agencies. The universal midwifery service effectively protects unborn babies by supporting women who are misusing substances through close working with the maternal substance misuse liaison nurse.
39. There is good, effective partnership working across midwifery, substance misuse services and the local authority. There are fortnightly multi-agency meetings to discuss the progress of any pregnancies where there are child protection concerns. These meetings help ensure that any support or child protection arrangements are in place when the baby is born. There is a teenage pregnancy lead in each midwifery team. However there is no care pathway that sets out clear expectations of what service teenage pregnant women can expect to receive; this means that although the teenagers are offered enhanced ante natal care in line with NICE guidance, there is no formal monitoring of the service for this vulnerable group of young women. The family nurse partnership is able to demonstrate good outcomes for the families that engaged with the project. Early findings

include a reduction in second pregnancies, increase in breastfeeding rates and an improvement in the numbers of normal deliveries for this cohort of young women.

40. There is good provision of Tier 2 services to support the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people, this includes the Supportive Action for Families in Ealing (SAFE) and Ealing Service for Children with Additional Needs (ESCAN) teams which offer flexible and responsive packages of care. Tier 3 CAMHS is delivered from a community base through four multi-disciplinary care groups. Some of the teams operate a waiting list for both the initial assessment and then for access to treatment. The waiting time to access the neurodevelopment and learning disability service is currently 11 months though this is being actively addressed. The most recent quality report shows that a high number of inappropriate referrals continue to be received by the teams and while it is reported that the majority of these referrals are redirected to a more suitable service there are no formal pathways in place to facilitate this.
41. There is good support offered to families and carers of children and young people with complex health needs. Most therapy services are co-located in a building that is central to Ealing and is easily accessible by families. The co-location has resulted in much more joint working with multi-disciplinary clinics and input into specialist parenting groups such as the "Early Birds."
42. The provision of short breaks for families with learning disabilities and complex care needs is good. There is a wide range of options that families can benefit from, including overnight and respite holiday care. There is some encouraging work with families around providing intensive support to allow those children with complex needs who previously would have been accommodated in a residential school to remain with their family. This work has been positively evaluated and there are plans to extend the age range of children who can benefit from the service.
43. There are improved and adequate processes in place within adult mental health services to identify where service users have children or have significant child caring responsibilities. Staff receive training and regular briefings on risk assessing the impact of the service user's mental health on the safety of the children and a new framework is being piloted to facilitate this work. The trust has made outstanding progress in providing appropriate and child centred visiting facilities for children to visit their parents whilst they are in-patients. The current pathways for the referral of children who have suffered suspected sexual abuse are adequate. All acute cases are seen at the Haven facility run by St Mary's hospital in Paddington. The non-acute examinations are carried out either by the community or acute paediatricians in Ealing.
44. The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) is effective and appropriately constituted with good representation from both Ealing and Hillingdon.

There appear to be good arrangements for the rapid response team from Ealing Hospitals NHS Trust. The CDOP commissioned the Hillingdon and Ealing Community Roadshows during early 2010 and produced information on key health messages raised during the CDOP reviews. The CDOP has not yet evaluated the bereavement support offered to parents though this is planned for 2011/2012.

Ambition and prioritisation

Grade 1 (outstanding)

45. Ambition and prioritisation are outstanding. Innovative and creative use of early intervention planning has successfully resulted in a decrease in the total number of referrals to statutory social work teams. This is in stark contrast to the national picture of a significant increasing trend. The increase in capacity of social work and early intervention teams have resulted in manageable caseloads ensuring that effective work with vulnerable children is maintained. Social workers who work full time have an average of 16 children and young people on their caseload. Highly competent senior officers across the partnership provide clear strategic direction, respond effectively to the changing demands for the service and prioritise the allocation of resources to support safeguarding. The strategic leadership of the council and its partners give safeguarding the highest priority. In June 2010 the London SCB were commissioned by the council to audit cases where children are subject to a child protection plan. The audit outcomes were shared across the ESCB and enabled further improvements to service delivery to be made. The number of children who are subject to a child protection plan has reduced from 378 to 281 as of 31 March 2011 as a result of effective early intervention services and improved practice from social workers with relatively low caseloads. There is very good cross party commitment to the safeguarding agenda and a number of key elected members proactively champion the needs of children and families.
46. Safeguarding priorities are clearly identified in the Children's and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and other related strategic documents. There is a comprehensive and evolving safeguarding improvement plan which is regularly refreshed to respond to change and competing demands of the service. The safeguarding improvement plan outlines the council's ambition to seek continual improvement and focus upon key issues as a single partnership with shared responsibilities to and for vulnerable children. Robust arrangements are in place for the collation of performance data and decisions are based on rigorous needs analysis. The areas for development outlined in the last unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in November 2010 have already been addressed and inspectors found clear evidence of improvement in casework and service delivery. In addition significant work has taken place to embed learning from serious case reviews, increase provision of services to manage domestic violence and roll out reflective supervision for all safeguarding professionals. There is a very good level of

transparency in the arrangements for reporting on performance and effective challenge across the partnership by the council through its scrutiny committee and scrutiny panel, the LSCB and the Children's Trust Board to ensure responses are appropriately joined up and sharply focused on meeting local needs.

47. The Council has a proactive approach to engage the workforce in service improvements. The views of staff from front line child protection services have been sought and utilised in the redesign of service delivery. For example the views of staff were central to the changes to initial and core assessment formats which are now more streamlined and focused on improving outcomes. Consultation with staff has also been particularly effective in the development of early intervention and prevention services.
48. The authority gives high priority to their responsibility for ensuring the narrowing of the gap in outcomes between the most disadvantaged children and their peers. There are good arrangements for reporting on narrowing the gap for vulnerable groups such as in educational achievement which is regularly reported to the scrutiny panel. Innovative action research is being used to understand what works effectively in raising the achievement of disaffected young people and learning is being disseminated through school forums. There have been improvements in the attainment of identified groups of children such as Black heritage students and girls entitled to free school meals.

Leadership and management

Grade 1 (outstanding)

49. Leadership and management are outstanding. Senior managers have been successful in securing more resources for children's services during the last year in order to improve the recruitment and retention of staff, reduce caseloads so that effective work can be carried out and ensure that preventative services meet identified local need and reduce referrals to statutory services. Elected members have a high degree of confidence in senior managers within the council and this enabled further resources to be made available in spite of the current economic conditions.
50. Senior managers use management information effectively to understand local performance and the strengths and weaknesses of the service. They are committed to outward facing partnerships and willing to share data and resources in order to secure improved outcomes for children. For example some key health LAC staff have access to the children's services database so that they can have up to date information on looked after children to aid their decision making.
51. Significant work has taken place as part of the workforce development strategy. The council is fully aware of the need for a skilled and stable workforce and the impact of instability. Over the last two years the

retention of staff has improved considerably, those that have been recruited are reflective of the local community and at the time of this inspection there were no vacancies in frontline child protection and child in need teams. There is a high ratio of team managers to social workers. Supervision arrangements for social work staff are comprehensive and robust. This is supported by a programme of performance development which is well embedded. Social workers confirmed that supervision is routine and of good quality. Casework supervision has a clear focus on the effective management of risk and records are robust. They demonstrate an increasing focus upon reflective supervision and case records consistently have evidence of management oversight and supervision decisions.

52. The LSCB has developed a comprehensive training programme which is closely aligned to its business plan. Social workers informed inspectors that the training they receive is valuable, relevant and comprehensive. Safer recruitment training has been rolled out across the partnership and there are clear indications from the increasing numbers of referrals that the role of the LADO is understood. One of the key drivers of the LSCB training is learning from serious case reviews. The LSCB is embedding a model of reflective supervision for key safeguarding professionals including designated teachers and piloting reflective supervision for GP's.

Performance management and quality assurance

Grade 2 (good)

53. Performance management and quality assurance are good. Senior managers have developed a strong culture of audit and performance management which is leading to significant improvements in safeguarding outcomes. Good systems are in place to disseminate performance information across health, education and children services. This is being used well to monitor performance and inform service improvements. Performance and audit information, such as from regular case file audits, is routinely collated and interrogated by managers at all levels to identify trends and issues that impact on the effectiveness of services, such as ensuring case recording is up to date and of satisfactory quality. External audits have been used effectively to examine practice. The local authority are confident enough to use external organisations to audit their work and they successfully used an audit by the London SCB to improve performance in relation to children subject to child protection plans.
54. There is evidence of good needs analysis informing service planning including services to tackle some of the most challenging areas of work: for example, providing support services for children with special needs who have severely challenging behaviour in order to prevent placement and home breakdowns. Access to child protection advisors has been made available to professionals from across the partnership so that individual concerns about children and young people can be discussed and advice

sought. In addition, robust conflict resolution arrangements are in place that operate across the partnership. Procedures for this have been agreed by the LSCB and staff from a range of agencies reported to inspectors that these initiatives have had a very positive impact.

55. The council, its partners and staff have worked hard over the last two years to ensure that improvements in service delivery are embedded in the work of the statutory social work teams. Inspectors found strong evidence of key improvements including the quality of assessments, manageable caseloads and strong management influence and accountability. The local authority is aware that these improvements are less well established in the Children with Disability team and there is a need for further work in order to improve outcomes for some children with disabilities. During the inspection, inspectors found a small number of child in need cases where the work completed was not of a high quality. Although no children were left at risk of significant harm in these cases, the level of recording was poor and the level of interaction with children in these families was low. The council immediately recognised and responded appropriately to these cases and they also initiated further case audits to establish the parameters of the problem.
56. There are effective systems for staff appraisal and performance development which are highly valued by all staff. Staff are committed, motivated and enthusiastic. They state that they are well supported by managers who are readily accessible for formal and informal consultation. Staff who spoke with inspectors stated they value and respect the leadership qualities of their managers. They report that they receive good quality reflective supervision and are aware of the priorities of the local authority and the aspiration for continual improvement.

Partnership working

Grade 1 (outstanding)

57. Partnership working is outstanding. There is highly effective joint work between the LSCB, the Strategic Partnership Board and the council. This is based upon thorough needs analysis set out in the CYPP 2011/14. Key priorities focus on the specific needs of the local communities which provides a sound basis for multi-agency work across the borough including the third sector. This foundation has enabled strategic partners to develop through pooled budgets highly effective early intervention and prevention services across the local authority area. These services have achieved outstanding outcomes, the number of children and young people referred to statutory social work teams has reduced and the number of children and young people who need to be accommodated has also fallen. This performance when set against national trends of significant increase is highly significant.

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58. Multi-agency partnerships are well established at all levels and they have a strong focus on monitoring and evaluating performance and driving programmes forward to improve services. The ESCB has a clear focus upon continuous improvement, audit and performance outcomes. During the last two years there has been a strong ESCB focus on learning from serious case reviews and embedding this in practice so sustainable improvement can be achieved. For example, in relation to the partnership's response to domestic violence the ESCB recognised shortfalls in knowledge, service provision and resources. They have, over the last two years' commissioned research on effective interventions for domestic violence, rolled out comprehensive training for all safeguarding professionals in relation to the recognition of and risks to children and young people of domestic violence and appointed a domestic violence advisor to provide expert advice for colleagues.
59. The safeguarding improvement plan is influenced by feedback from children, families and partner agencies. Feedback from parents and carers in relation to initial child protection case conferences has influenced planning and the development of a family group conference model for case conferences. The safeguarding and diversity subgroup of the ESCB is well attended including representatives from the third sector. The diversity subgroup is tackling important, complex and challenging areas of child protection work and has successfully provided targeted information and awareness raising on subjects such as female genital mutilation and forced marriages.
60. All partnership boards benefit from a good level of representation from a wide range of agencies who demonstrate a high degree of commitment and focus. There are examples of shared budgets, for example between health and children's social care, joint programmes and multi-agency working which are helping to reduce duplication and provide holistic responses to meet the needs of children and families.

Services for looked after children

Overall effectiveness

Grade 2 (good)

61. The overall effectiveness of services for looked after children is good. The council has a strong focus on improving the life chances and achievement of its looked after children. There are robust arrangements in place to maintain the health of children and young people who are looked after and outcomes are outstanding. Educational outcomes for looked after children are consistently improving year on year and children are strongly supported to succeed. The quality of services to support and improve safeguarding of looked after children, young people and care leavers is good. The views of children and young people are actively sought on a regular basis to ensure assessments remain relevant and focused on safeguarding and the needs of looked after children. A variety of multi-agency and corporate panels, attended by senior managers, provide effective monitoring of risks, quality of care and value for money.
62. Opportunities to promote positive contribution are given high priority within strategic plans. Children and young people looked after by the local authority had significant input into the development of the Horizon centre, which provides a wide range of out of hours learning and accredited leisure opportunities that are highly valued by its users. Both the junior and senior children in care councils make a significant contribution to ensuring that the needs of looked after children are well represented to decision makers. Unaccompanied children and young people are supported well by specialist services that have strong links with housing and legal services.
63. The council is aware that the quality of personal education plans (PEPS) is variable in their timeliness and the quality of the planning. Outcomes for care leavers remain very strong and currently the local authority supports over 40 young people to attend university which is significantly better than national averages. Services for those looked after children who live more than 20 miles from Ealing are not as comprehensive as those for children within this radius.

Capacity for improvement

Grade 1 (outstanding)

64. There is outstanding capacity for improvement. The council and its partners have a very strong track record of improvements to services for looked after children, young people and care leavers. Performance and service delivery is comprehensively monitored and reported to relevant partners, senior officers and elected members. Corporate parenting responsibilities are understood and taken very seriously.
65. Investment in preventative and early intervention services has led to a decline in the looked after children population which is in contrast to

trends across London. Thresholds for entering care are appropriately applied and risk is managed well. Case file auditing has improved the quality of service delivery and assessments. The workforce development strategy has improved the stability of the workforce and reduced the number of changes of social worker that looked after children experience. Financial management and monitoring of placements are appropriately focused whilst ensuring individual needs of children are central to care planning. Outcomes for looked after children and young people and for care leavers are consistently high and above both national and local comparators.

Areas for improvement

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

Immediately:

- Ensure that all care leavers are provided with a copy of their health records at the point in which they leave care.

Within three months:

- Ensure that care plans for those children and young people who are placed away from Ealing and cannot access resources in the borough reflect how equality of opportunity is going to be achieved.
- The partnership should ensure that there are clear pathways of care for children and young people that are looked after who require support from mental health services. The partnership should closely monitor waiting times, activity and outcomes for this vulnerable group of children and young people
- Ensure that care leavers and looked after young people have increased opportunities to undertake apprenticeships through local schemes.

How good are outcomes for looked after children and care leavers?

Being healthy

Grade 2 (good)

67. Services to promote the health of looked after children, young people and care leavers are good. There is regular health representation on the multi-agency panel that meets to discuss funding and allocation of placements for looked after children and young people. There is a full-time designated nurse for looked after children and young people, commissioned by the local authority, and a part-time medical advisor, provided by the primary care trust, for looked after children and young people. The team is supplemented by a clinical psychologist, also commissioned by children's services, whose work is predominantly around preventing placement breakdown. Plans are in place for the responsibilities of the role of designated doctor for looked after children and young people to be shared amongst a number of lead roles, including the primary care trust designated doctor for safeguarding children. However this arrangement is not yet finalised.
68. Partnership working between the designated nurse for looked after children, the medical advisor for looked after children and the local authority's children and families service is strong. The designated nurse and medical advisor have been given access to the authority's electronic client database and also have a local authority email address. This helps to ensure that information used to inform initial health assessments and health reviews is as comprehensive and accurate as possible and that information can be shared confidentially.
69. There are robust arrangements in place to maintain the health of children and young people who are looked after. In 2010/2011 the very large majority (93.5%) of the health reviews are carried out in time. Similarly, the very large majority (93.1%) of all looked after children and young people have accessed a dentist, which is 10.4% above national performance. Most (87.7%) are up to date with their immunisations which is 10.2% above national performance. The medicals are carried out by paediatric registrars and the medical advisor for looked after children and young people completes the health care plan. The health reviews are carried out by either the designated nurse for looked after children or the medical advisor. Young people are offered a choice in the venue for their review health assessments. There has been no formal evaluation of the looked after children and young people health services by service users.
70. The arrangements for obtaining health reviews for those placed out of borough are good. Any child or young person within a 20 mile radius is brought back into Ealing for their review; where a child is outside of the 20 mile boundary there is a clear process for requesting the medical

assessment or review from the receiving looked after children service and systems are in place to provide payment where requested. Progress on all health care plans is monitored formally through the independent reviewing officers during the child's statutory reviews.

71. Staffing within the health care team for looked after children is insufficient to meet demand for support to care leavers. Arrangements to support the health needs of young people leaving care are under developed. The designated nurse for looked after children has no formal input into the pathway planning process and young people are not provided with a comprehensive summary of their health records when they leave care.
72. The work of the clinical psychologist for looked after children and young people is effective. A range of support services are offered including advice, signposting to other services, input into the foster care parenting programme, meeting regularly with staff working in the residential children's home, consultation and one to one casework.
73. Looked after children have good access to substance misuse services through early intervention and prevention services and the Easy project. Looked after young people are encouraged to access universal contraceptive and sexual health services and additional support is available from the sexual health and teenage pregnancy support worker who can provide one to one support and signposting for looked after young people needing advice on sexual health. There is an effective multi-agency care pathway for looked after young women who become pregnant and choose to continue with their pregnancy and these young women are referred to the family nurse partnership.
74. There is no dedicated CAMHS for looked after children and young people as the Ealing model of community based Tier 2 mental health ensures that services are readily accessible and provides the opportunity to identify and meet emotional health needs at an early stage. However, for those young people that require Tier 3 CAMHS there is no formal care pathway and there are some looked after children and young people that are on waiting lists for Tier 3 treatment (four children awaiting first assessment with the time from receipt of referral to first assessment being between two and four and a half weeks). The Tier 3 CAMHS and learning disability threshold and referral criterion explicitly refers to a child's looked after status as a risk factor that would impact on a case needs assessment.

Staying safe

Grade 2 (good)

75. The impact of services to support and improve safeguarding of looked after children, young people and care leavers is good. Looked after children who are placed in council-run provisions are safeguarded to a good standard. The council's fostering service is judged to be outstanding and the two children's homes and adoption service are all judged to be good. Children are further safeguarded by the improved quality of annual

reviews of foster carers now undertaken by the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service. All looked after children have an allocated qualified social worker.

76. Almost all looked after children reviews are completed within timescales and this performance is kept under close review by senior managers. Case files examined show that children and young people attend their own reviews and IRO report that they are encouraged and enabled to contribute positively to these using a variety of methods including the IRO visiting the young person prior to the review. The IRO reports clearly demonstrate the expressed views and wishes of children, and where these are not able to be met for various reasons, these are appropriately recorded, along with any alternative agreements reached with the child. The views of children and young people about their placements and how safe they feel are checked regularly at statutory reviews and this is supported by other processes such as the bi-annual 'electronic buzz' survey and peer consultation work undertaken by staff and members of the children in care council. Additional safety checks are provided by regular meetings between the IRO manager and senior managers in children's services to share issues of concern which are raised during children's reviews to ensure these are acted upon promptly. There is clear communication between the IRO manager and the commissioning and contracting team in children's services to ensure that issues of concern about an external placement informs placement commissioning.
77. Children's wellbeing and safety is promoted by statutory visits by social workers which are timely and recorded on the child's electronic record. Children's social workers also perform a key role in ensuring that children are safe in their placements, for example, by seeing them on their own, and this is also recorded. The recent Care4Me Survey had 25 responses from looked after children in Ealing of which 16 reported their social worker always spoke to them on their own and nine reported this sometimes happened. All children receive an information pack when they become looked after and this includes information about the advocacy service and the complaints procedure.
78. Thresholds for children entering the care system are applied appropriately and children are not left at risk. The application of thresholds is supported by resource panels of senior managers and legal planning meetings which ensure that only children for whom local authority care is the best option are looked after.
79. Looked after children have good access to advocacy services and where appropriate are helped with making complaints. The local authority commissions an effective external advocacy service, VOICE, and information about it is provided to children when they enter care. This service also supports looked after children who wish to make representations or complaints. The effectiveness of advocacy and

complaints services are monitored via quarterly meetings between the service provider and children's services managers and emerging issues and trends are also explored. Independent visitors are provided via the independent IRO service. However there are reported to be only one or two being commissioned per year, which is low considering the high proportion of children placed outside of the borough. The reason for this low take up has not yet been explored by the local authority.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 2 (good)

80. The impact of services on enabling looked after children and young people to enjoy and achieve is good. The looked after children's education team demonstrate a strong commitment to enhancing looked after children and young people's life chances through raising awareness of the importance of their educational achievement across children's services and partners. The progress made by children is regularly reported to the corporate parenting panel and the wider council.
81. Educational outcomes for looked after children at Key Stage 2 have improved over the last three years, with an increasing number gaining Level 4 in English and in mathematics. Attainment in both these subjects was better than in similar areas and England. The very large majority of looked after children for whom data is available made at least expected progress in both English and mathematics in 2010. The proportion of looked after young people achieving at least five GCSEs or equivalent in Ealing in 2010 was higher than the similar area and England average. There was an increase in the number attaining five good grades (A*– C), including English and mathematics in 2010 and results for looked after young people are improving at a faster pace than for all Ealing pupils.
82. Educational outcomes for those children who are placed outside of the borough are not as good as for those placed in Ealing, although a high proportion of the out of borough cohort still gained five GCSEs in 2010, more than looked after young people nationally. Comparatively lower results are partly explained through the more complex needs of some of these children and young people, but there is an acceptance that relations with schools outside the borough are more difficult to build and maintain. The looked after children and young people's education team monitors the quality of provision and children's progress, but are developing tighter tracking mechanisms that will improve support for those out of borough. Visits to out of borough placements are carried out by the looked after children teachers when concerns arise.
83. The quality and timeliness of the children and young people's PEPs is variable. Some lack effective targets and detail, although all plans seen by inspectors include the views of the child. Teachers from the looked after children's education team monitor PEPs but this is not done systematically. Funding is used effectively to provide additional support to those pupils

that are not making expected progress. One to one tuition is effective and available to all looked after children as required, with external tutors employed for young people out of borough when appropriate.

84. There have been no permanent exclusions of looked after children since 2008. The rate of fixed term exclusions for looked after children and young people is consistently lower than the rate for the total pupil population in Ealing in both primary and secondary schools. Looked after children and young people are given the highest priority when experiencing exclusion or managed moves, and provision through the education other than at school (EOTAS) service is provided swiftly and is of good quality. In 2009–2010, 15 looked after children aged 16 were attending EOTAS and of these, 10 young people have established pathways into college courses. A bespoke service is provided for looked after children and young people with complex needs, for example, young offenders. No looked after children and young people are without educational placements.
85. The looked after children's education team monitors attendance at school closely and, where there are concerns, works to bring about improvement in conjunction with the schools and carers. The latest local authority data for the autumn term 2010 shows that the very large majority of school aged looked after children and young people have school attendance rates of over 90%. However attendance in Key Stage 4 is not as good with only two thirds of these young people having attendance rates of over 90%. Overall, for the same term, looked after children's attendance was better than the borough average for all children at primary level (96.6% compared to 94.02%) and in line with the borough average for all students at secondary school (93.67% compared to 93.91%).
86. Strenuous efforts are made by the looked after children's education team to ensure that school moves are avoided when possible or carried out at suitable times; not during test and examination periods. The 25 looked after children and young people that responded to the Care4Me survey all stated that either they had never had to change schools or that a change of school was in their best interests. Most of the respondents feel they are getting a good or better education. There is good support from the looked after children's education team for foster carers to improve their skills in supporting looked after children and young people's educational achievements.
87. A wide range of out of hours learning and accredited leisure opportunities is provided through the Horizons centre, which is highly valued by children and young people who strongly influenced the design and development of the provision. Available activities include regular homework sessions, one to one support from peer mentors and a range of weekly leisure opportunities, as well as holiday activities and residential trips. Strong partnerships, for example between the local authority and the Tate

Modern and Brentford Football Club enhance the range of quality art and sporting activities. The council has bought 30 tickets for Olympic events which will be made available to looked after children. This is intended to promote their exposure to positive world events and positive role models and activities as the tickets have been bought for events where athletes from Ealing perform well.

88. Efforts are being made to ensure that children and young people placed out of borough are able to access the same level and quality of leisure activities and this is identified by the local authority as an area for further development. Children and young people's participation in activities out of school is monitored on an individual basis at social worker visits, through personal education plans and by IROs. All looked after children and young people, including those from out of borough, are invited to special events, such as the annual awards ceremonies that celebrate their achievements.

Making a positive contribution, including user engagement Grade 1 (outstanding)

89. The impact of services to enable looked after children and young people to make a positive contribution is outstanding. Opportunities to promote positive contribution are given high priority within strategic plans. Provision is highly successful in helping children and young people develop their communication skills and there are many ways for them to express their views on how services can be improved. Looked after children, young people and care leavers seen during the inspection highly value their involvement with the Horizons centre, a hub of activity for looked after children and young people, and speak proudly of their learning and development. One young person said the support she receives from the centre is 'amazing'. The 'ME - my education' peer mentoring programme enables care leavers to provide support to looked after young people aged 14 to 16 years. The benefits to both mentors and mentees are excellent.
90. In 2009/2010 98.7% of all looked after children and young people communicated their views to their reviews, which is very good and better than similar area and national averages. Looked after children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are encouraged and enabled to inform their reviews. The large majority of the 25 looked after children and young people who completed the Care4Me survey said their opinions had made a difference to their care.
91. The Corporate Parenting Panel meets four times a year at Horizons, which means they have good opportunities to meet with children and young people directly. The well-established Horizon ShoutOut Group (the children in care council for older young people and care leavers) and the children in care junior council report regularly to the corporate parenting panel and this has influenced some changes, for example with regard to levels of

allowances. The Horizon ShoutOut Group is currently awaiting feedback on various issues they have raised with the corporate parenting panel, such as the level of bursary for university students. They are also hoping to expand the diversity of the children in care council by attracting more young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Horizons ShoutOut group has a high profile, involving meeting peers in other local authority areas, contributing to national consultations, research programmes and events and providing information to national researchers and politicians. These opportunities have a positive impact on the personal development and communication skills of the young people involved, who become role models for the wider looked after children population.

92. The local authority has a good track record of ensuring looked after children, young people and care leavers access a wide range of consultation and participation opportunities. Achievements are celebrated annually through well-established Outer Limits and Rising Stars events, which are also consultation events. Children and young people have been extensively involved in the development of the detailed pledge for looked after children. The pledge has now been agreed, published and sent to all looked after children and young people.
93. Performance is very good with respect to the low numbers of looked after children and young people who offend (3.8% compared to 7.9% nationally for 2009/2010). A range of preventative programmes are available to reduce further involvement. The YOS prioritises looked after children and young people who are allocated to YOS officers who are qualified social workers with backgrounds in children's social care. Positive case progress is ensured via multi-agency case review panels convened every six weeks to review the progress of every looked after child and other young people assessed as being at risk of entering the care system. Strategies to reduce the criminalisation of care leavers include restorative justice training being delivered to the semi-independent outreach team (SOT) on the basis that their caseload includes young people more likely to commit low level criminal or nuisance activity and therefore require this intervention to prevent escalation into formal criminal justice arrangements.

Economic well-being

Grade 2 (good)

94. The impact of services to support and improve the economic well-being of looked after children, young people and care leavers is good. Effective joint working between the leaving care team, Horizons, SOT, Connexions, the looked after children's education team, post-16 teacher and housing services ensures young people are well prepared for independence and to develop successful adult lives.

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95. In 2010 the large majority (71.2%) of care leavers were in employment, education or training and performance was better than found nationally. The latest local data shows that good performance is being maintained (71.7%). The majority of these young people are in education and training. Care leavers are successfully encouraged to access a wide range of suitable educational provision and receive positive support to continue with their education through the work of the Horizons Centre and the post-16 teacher within the looked after children's education team. Forty two care leavers from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds are studying at university, which is significantly better performance than nationally. These young people are given financial support to enable them to complete their studies and are provided with suitable accommodation during university holiday periods. Positive planning at transition enables care leavers, including those with disabilities, to remain in their placements until they finish their education. Care leavers seen during the inspection are positive about the support they receive from all agencies, but have experienced some changes in social workers reflecting staffing concerns in the leaving care team.
96. The local authority recognises the need to ensure there are equally effective employment opportunities for care leavers and looked after young people and development work is ongoing. Currently, the local authority is working in partnership with local employers such as BAA Heathrow to engage care leavers in employment and apprenticeship opportunities. However, this is at an early stage and the impact of this work is not yet known. Other apprenticeship opportunities are available through Ealing Apprenticeships and V Talent. These are aimed at all young people who are not in employment, education and training, including care leavers and looked after young people. Care leavers and looked after young people are prioritised for a range of apprenticeship opportunities both within and external to the council. Three places per annum are reserved on the Council apprenticeship scheme, six have engaged in the V talent scheme and a further 15 care leavers have taken up apprenticeships facilitated by, but external to the Council.
97. A wide range of agencies are fully engaged in complementary work that meets the varied needs of both looked after young people and care leavers. At age 15 young people in care transfer into the leaving care team without delay, ensuring pathway planning begins at an early stage. All young people have a pathway plan in place, but the quality of pathway plans is currently variable although improving, and a review is being undertaken to ensure that the plan is made more meaningful for the young person. The transition into adulthood is enhanced when necessary by the work of SOT, which allocates an outreach worker to provide guidance and short or long term support to meet individual young people's needs. An in-house Skills4Life pre-tenancy training programme ensures that care leavers are ready to take the next step into independent accommodation.

98. The vast majority of care leavers are placed in suitable accommodation. The access to resources team have carefully mapped suitable provision and future requirements are clearly identified, including specialist provision for vulnerable groups, such as young people involved with, or on the edge of, gang activity. Recent commissioning of further semi-independent provision through West London YMCA has increased the range of accommodation available, including in-house provision for parent and child assessments. Most care leavers are well supported through the bidding process for independent council accommodation and have a choice of geographical areas and properties.
99. Unaccompanied minors are supported by a specialist team and benefit from assessment for services from the point of presentation at council customer services. Where additional support needs are identified, resources are agreed by the 'At Risk of Homelessness' Panel and kept under review to ensure needs have not changed and services remain appropriate. There is good attention to young people's individual needs including their ethnicity and considerable efforts are made to match children with carers or ensure their ethnic, cultural and religious needs are met in other ways when they are placed with carers or in establishments that do not reflect their specific heritage.

Quality of provision

Grade 2 (good)

100. The quality of provision for looked after children is good. There is good case planning and evidence of robust management oversight. Children's case records are up to date and reviews of the child's journey through care are supported by comprehensive chronologies on case files. Children benefit from good quality assessments which take into account all their needs. Additional scrutiny of case planning is provided by a commissioned externally sourced IRO service which ensures that plans are effective. The well established IRO service ensures reviews are timely, case planning is progressing well, and completing reviews in stages if individual children's circumstances make this the best option for them. Future planning is supported by 'SMART' recommendations and target setting. The timely distribution of minutes ensures that all staff are aware of their role in supporting the child to achieve specified outcomes. Outstanding or imminent tasks on individual cases, for example, updating the PEP, are flagged up via the electronic client record and automatically notified to the allocated workers and their managers. This enables the timeliness of task completion to be effectively monitored via the looked after children review process and also within social workers' supervision sessions.
101. There is evidence of detailed and sensitive assessment and planning for children which contributes to improved stability of placements, for example, preparing adoptive carers for potential future behavioural difficulties that may emerge, helping them to understand the reasons why, and helping them develop coping strategies with a view to pre-empting

potential crises. The stability of looked after children's placements was good in 2009/10, having improved year on year and is lower than Ealing's statistical neighbours and nationally. The proportion of looked after children who had been in their placement for two years or more is also good, having increased to 73.5% in 2009/10.

102. A number of children benefit from high-quality specialist resources designed to address their complex needs. Placements for children are needs led rather than cost led, but all external placements are reviewed frequently to ensure that the level of support provided closely matches the child's current needs and that placements are focused on ensuring permanency within a community setting wherever possible.
103. There is a strong focus on permanency planning. Adoption or alternatives such as Special Guardianship orders are considered at a suitably early stage particularly in relation to young children and infants and preparation plans are initiated to support this. Where plans have not resulted in permanency, alternative plans are quickly developed and this helps to minimise drift. Delay for children being placed for adoption is reduced by legal services securing placement orders at the point of final care hearing. Delay in progressing care plans are assisted by the attendance of a senior legal advisor at the weekly 'Early Intervention Panel' which considers every child who has become looked after and this facilitates an early assessment of the need for future legal proceedings or advice. Lawyers report that no artificial limits are placed on the number of care proceedings that are commenced and that thresholds are appropriate which is supported by case auditing. Children in sibling groups clearly have their individual needs considered and addressed, as well as the implications of care planning in relation to sibling relationship and attachments, and parental and wider family contacts.
104. Quality assurance of casework is evident via management decision making and reviewing which is recorded on the child's case record. This is supported by an established system of case auditing which is monitored and progressed by a specialist quality assurance officer. The audit tool has been refined with use and incorporates issues raised, for example, in serious case review findings, reflecting the authority's commitment to learning from these. Case audits are generally thorough and the impact of these is reported positively by team managers who, whilst acknowledging the time demands they create, are able to describe how they enable service improvements in identifying both staff performance issues and also child-specific improvement issues. The case audits completed for this inspection are good and generally thorough, identifying areas of strength and areas requiring improvement.
105. Some looked after children have experienced several changes of social workers and this is a source of complaint that emerges from various children's consultative exercises. The negative consequences for looked

after children of historical turnover of social workers has been offset, in part, by many having the same IRO for substantial periods, along with stronger consistency of team managers. Foster carers report improved consistency of social workers for children placed with them. Every foster carer is supported by a named link worker and have access to a comprehensive training programme.

106. There is a dedicated adoption team and adoption support service. In 2010- 2011 there were 35 special guardianship and adoption orders made, which is better performance than found in similar areas and nationally. Adoption placements are generally stable with only three disruptions in 2009-10. There is good practice with disruption reviews being held and independently chaired. Recruitment of potential adopters is good. Speed of placement is generally good although there are some children waiting for suitable adoptive placements. The adoption service provides a wide range of high quality services for applicants, adopters and birth families, as well as training and providing guidance, for example, for schools. The learning from the most recent adoption disruption reviews has identified the importance of communication and good matching arrangements.
107. Children placed with 'family and friends' carers benefit from an effective kinship team. The team currently supports 50 looked after children and 14 children who have Special Guardianship Orders. Placement stability is good with no placement breakdowns for children placed under Special Guardianship Orders.

Ambition and prioritisation

Grade 1 (outstanding)

108. The local authority has outstanding ambition and prioritisation strategies for looked after children, which are supported by a clear and detailed analysis of its looked after children population including forward projections based on a broad suite of demographic indicators. Outstanding ambition and prioritisation by senior managers and elected politicians leads to outcomes for looked after children and young people that are at least good in all areas. In the making of a positive contribution the outcome areas are outstanding.
109. The corporate parenting panel is well established and proactive. It has senior membership and is currently chaired by the Leader of the Council, attended by the lead member for children's services, the Opposition Leader and the Deputy Leader, demonstrating the council's excellent corporate commitment to looked after children. There is strong representation and involvement from young people, and young people who are in care currently or have been in care previously are permanent members of the panel in their role as members of the children in care council, Horizon ShoutOut Group. Members report good cooperative cross party working in this area with all political parties continuing to agree that looked after children remain a pan-council priority. The wider council is

briefed about developments and progress for looked after children by senior officers on a regular basis and the corporate parenting panel is now receiving performance reports on the progress being made by individual looked after children.

110. There is a downward trend in the number of looked after children from 425 in June 2010 to 416 in August 2010 and this has reduced further to 386 at 31 March 2011. Thorough case analysis undertaken by the local authority confirms that the threshold for becoming looked after remains appropriate and children are not being left at risk. This is supported by the findings of this inspection. Performance regarding children moving to permanency is excellent with 7.5% of looked after children being adopted or under Special Guardianship orders in the year 2009/10. There is also good educational performance with 72% of looked after children obtaining at least one GCSE A* – G grade or equivalent in 2010, significantly above the national and similar areas' performance.
111. Joint working between health, specialist education and children's social care budget holders is highly effective, ensuring children with complex needs have these met in the most appropriate way. Children in jointly funded placements are reviewed monthly to ensure the placements continue to meet their needs. Ealing's membership of the London consortium of local authorities ensures value for money and continuous raising of standards of service provision in external placements. The council is also collaborating with eight other West London councils on three work streams of mutual benefit, one of which is to further improve value for money on placements within this catchment area.
112. There is evidence of highly effective practice and creative approaches to improving the outcomes for the most vulnerable looked after children. For example a multi-disciplinary group of specialist staff undertook an analysis of the plans for looked after children with the most concerning emotional health and behaviour in 2011, utilising their Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs). This led to some children having improved plans, additional resources and access to specialist services. Due to the success and positive impact of this work on outcomes for the most vulnerable looked after children and young people it has been decided to repeat it annually.
113. Progress on workforce development has been very good resulting in significant improvements in recruitment and retention. Although the council reported nearly 25% vacancy rate in social work posts at June 2010, there was already greater stability in looked after children's teams and this has been further improved so that there are now very few vacancies in the looked after children teams.

Leadership and management**Grade 1 (outstanding)**

114. Leadership and management are outstanding. There is strong, highly competent and effective visible leadership within children's services to support services for looked after children and young people and drive continuous improvement. The vision for excellent services and outcomes for looked after children and young people is widely understood and shared throughout children's services and partner agencies.
115. The work force strategy has been highly successful. Based on careful self-analysis the council has achieved its goal of significantly improving the recruitment and retention of social workers for looked after children and young people, reflecting the diversity of the local community. Strategies to improve retention include: a recruitment and retention bonus scheme commenced in April 2011, developing a locality team model, continuing to provide placements for the Step Up to Social Work graduate programme, maintaining the university bursary and secondment schemes, extending the post of senior social worker as a career grade scheme across the whole service and maintaining the training and development programme. As a result, social workers' caseloads have improved and are maintained at a manageable level, which allows for good quality direct work with children. This is confirmed by social workers and team managers.
116. There is a very good ratio of managers to staff and first tier managers have manageable numbers of staff to support. This enables regular good quality individual supervision with managers and social workers have ample opportunity for informal case consultation and advice whenever required. There is good and improved career progression in place enabling social workers to progress to senior social worker status, working as experienced practitioners without managerial responsibilities deflecting from the time they can commit to high quality direct work with children. Social workers are able to secure additional resources for looked after children in external placements where these have been assessed as being of positive benefit to the child via application to monthly 'private and voluntary panels' chaired by senior managers. This system is also in place for care leavers.
117. The fostering service has continued to demonstrate clear improvements in the quality of care provided to looked after children and young people. For example, all foster carers have completed their Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) portfolio in line with best practice guidance. A successful 'Invest to Save' bid has resulted in an improved remuneration package for foster carers. The service's recruitment campaign has been informed by a thorough needs and gap analysis and is focused on recruiting specific carers. Recruitment is currently on target, with eight new carers scheduled for approval in the summer. Further improvements have been secured by the introduction of fee banding linked to skills and training of carers and 40 foster carers having achieved NVQ Level 3.

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118. There are many examples of highly effective partnership arrangements leading to improvements in services and outcomes for looked after children and young people. The joint housing/social care panel ensures that accommodation issues for 16 and 17 year olds are addressed and joint work with the YMCA has resulted in a growth in semi-independent and parent and child provision within the borough. Strong partnership arrangements with the YOS provide clarity on respective roles and responsibilities of staff in children's and youth offending services. Good joint working is assisted by the YOS being line managed within children's social care services whilst maintaining a clear and very effective focus on crime prevention and partnership working with the police and other criminal justice agencies. The service is well supported by the local authority and has a wide range of effective resources. There is an excellent partnership between an externally provided IRO service and the local authority which is well established, resulting in children's needs being met comprehensively.
119. Outstanding partnerships between the local authority's legal department and children's services are supported by well established protocols. Good existing arrangements have been further strengthened by the introduction of a legal proceedings panel to promote greater consistency across thresholds and further reduce delay. Partnership arrangements, performance and value for money are kept under review at quarterly meetings between legal staff and senior children's managers.
120. Foster carers, children, young people and the parents of looked after children and young people seen during the inspection reported very high levels of satisfaction with the services they receive. The ShoutOut Group and children in care junior council provide excellent opportunities for children and young people to express their views. Foster carers report feeling valued and listened to and their views have shaped and improved service delivery, for example, the local authority is now employing contact workers directly, thereby improving continuity of care for children.
121. There are comprehensive strategic plans for looked after children, including a detailed commissioning strategy, which set out clear ambitions to ensure that only children who need to be looked after enter care, and that children in care are moved into permanent placements where possible without remaining looked after. The commissioning strategy ensures that high quality placements are commissioned, that they are closely matched to individual children's needs and that they provide good value for money. The detailed analysis of the current and future needs of children who need to be looked after has ensured there is sufficiency of high quality provision across the age range for looked after children and care leavers. Gap analysis clearly links to key activities and developments which will increase specific resources which are currently lacking within the borough.

122. There is a highly effective complaints procedure for children's services including looked after children implemented by specialist trained staff. This is enhanced for children and young people by the independent advocacy and complaints service which supported 19 looked after children to make representations and complaints in 2010/2011. The content, outcomes and learning from complaints are subject to rigorous scrutiny by senior managers, the corporate parent panel and the council's scrutiny committee. Learning is cascaded within children's services to contribute to continuing improved practice. All complaints are dealt with in a timely manner and all Stage 2 complaints are independently investigated. There were 91 complaints about children's services made during 2010/11 of which 82% were not upheld. Of the three complaints investigated by the Ombudsman, none resulted in decisions against the council. Complaints staff apply the informal resolution procedures very effectively and service user satisfaction with this approach results in 80% of complaints being resolved at an early stage. Complaints made by children, even when not upheld, are examined sensitively and in detail and this has led to service improvements and individual support plan changes. For example, a refused request for contact with a member of the child's extended family was overturned upon further investigation to the benefit of the child, and a young person who had 'dropped out' of university was supported to return despite her grounds for complaint not being upheld. Very good communication between the complaints officer and operational managers in children's services is maintained and is effective in protecting children. Managers are vigilant in ensuring that use of the complaints process by parents or carers is not being used to divert professional attention away from child safeguarding concerns.

Performance management and quality assurance

Grade 2 (good)

123. Performance management and quality assurance are good. Good performance management arrangements ensure that all senior and first line managers are provided with up to date detailed monthly information about the performance of all teams within children's social care. This enables team managers to compare the performance of their team with regard to key indicators, such as timeliness of statutory visits to looked after children, against previous performance and in relation to other service areas at any given time. Information about costs of placements is also provided, enabling value for money to be considered alongside children's care plans and this is formalised at six-monthly meetings. This contributes to continuous improvement in services for looked after children.
124. Robust quarterly auditing of case files, undertaken by all levels of management, is overseen by the quality assurance manager, and this ensures that all identified actions are implemented to address staff performance issues as well as individual case management activity. Team

managers from across the service report that auditing cases held by other specialist teams within the service has an additional consequential positive impact of increasing their understanding of the role of different teams and promotes greater working together.

125. The quality of children's placements is monitored closely and importantly, any concerns raised by IROs are fed directly into the contracts and commissioning service. IROs currently report raising few concerns about placements and attribute this to the effectiveness of local and pan-London scrutiny of placements and higher standard setting of the commissioning consortium.
126. The arrangements to carry out annual reviews of foster carers has shown significant improvement since the commissioning of an independent agency to undertake these and the quality of reviews is reported by the local authority to be significantly improved. This was confirmed by inspectors following scrutiny of case files. The planned migration of the foster carer database to the electronic child recording system later this year is aimed at improving the service's ability to monitor children's movements, performance of carers and payments.

Record of main findings:

Safeguarding services	
Overall effectiveness	Good
Capacity for improvement	Outstanding
Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people	
Children and young people are safe and feel safe	Good
Quality of provision	Good
The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe	Good
Services for looked after children	
Ambition and prioritisation	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Performance management and quality assurance	Good
Partnership working	Outstanding
Equality and diversity	Good
How good are outcomes for looked after children and care leavers?	
Overall effectiveness	Good
Capacity for improvement	Outstanding
Being healthy	Good
Staying safe	Good
Enjoying and achieving	Good
Making a positive contribution, including user engagement	Outstanding
Economic well-being	Good
Quality of provision	Good
Services for looked after children	
Ambition and prioritisation	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Performance management and quality assurance	Good
Equality and diversity	Good