

Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services

London Borough of Newham

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Age group: All

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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:
 - information gathered through discussions with children and young people receiving services, front line staff and managers, senior officers including the Director of Children's Services and the Chair of Newham Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), 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 evaluations of a serious case review undertaken by Ofsted in accordance with *'Working Together to Safeguard Children'*, 2010
 - a review of 65 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 March 2011
 - interviews and focus groups with front line professionals, managers and senior staff from NHS East London and City (ELC), East London Foundation Trust (ELFT) and London Borough of Newham Primary Care Commissioning Directorate.

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. Newham is an outer London Borough with a resident population of approximately 75,000 children and young people aged 0 to 18, representing approximately 30% of the total population of the area. In 2010/2011, 91.8% of the school population was classified as belonging to an ethnic group other than White British compared to 22.5% in England overall. Some 65.8% of pupils speak English as an additional language. Bengali and Urdu are the most recorded commonly spoken community languages in the area, and 17.4% of pupils are of Bangladeshi background.
5. Newham has 90 schools comprising 66 junior, infant and primary schools, 13 maintained secondary schools and two secondary academies, four special and short stay schools. Early years service provision is delivered predominantly through the private and voluntary sector in over 63 settings; there are seven local authority maintained nurseries.
6. The partnership arrangements for children's services in Newham are overseen by the London Borough of Newham Children's Trust which was set up in 2009. The Trust includes senior representatives of Newham Council and Newham NHS (commissioner and provider) services and Primary Care Trust services. Other representatives include the Metropolitan Police, Probation, parent governors, Newham's elected Young Mayor and representatives of the voluntary sector, local schools and colleges. The LSCB became independently chaired in 2009, bringing together the main organisations working with children, young people and families.
7. Newham social care services for children have 69 in-house foster carers, one short break children's home and a small number of externally commissioned services such as fostering and residential care placements for looked after children. Since September 2010 community based children's services have been provided by four safeguarding duty social work teams, four intensive intervention social work teams dealing with the front door of social care and intensive work, eight threshold of care teams responsible for managing the children in need and child protection cases and managing cases through proceedings, and three looked after children teams. There are additional specialist teams for disabled children, youth offending, fostering and adoption and young people leaving care, placements and family assessment and contact. An emergency out of hours service provides cover for Newham. Other family support services are delivered through children's centres and extended services in schools. In 2011 a new early intervention service was established consisting of six locality based early intervention teams set up to deliver targeted preventative services. Some services are provided or coordinated through children's services such as learning and behaviour support, special

educational needs (SEN), youth services, teenage pregnancy, and Connexions.

8. At the time of the inspection there were 460 looked after children. They comprise 91 children less than five years of age, 299 children of school age (five to 16), 69 post-16 young people and a total of 212 with care leaver status. Newham uses a virtual school approach in supporting the learning needs of looked after children.
9. At the time of the inspection there were 295 children who were the subject of a child protection plan. Some 38% of these children are aged under five, 42.4% are five to 11 and 19.6% are 12 years or older. The highest categories of registration were neglect at 59.3% and emotional abuse at 23.7%.
10. Commissioning and planning of children and young peoples' health services and primary care are undertaken by NHS East London and City (ELC). London Borough of Newham primary care commissioning is undertaken through the Direct Commissioning Directorate with the remainder of health services being commissioned as part of the joint commissioning process managed through Children's Trust arrangements.
11. Community and universal services such as health visiting, school nursing, and paediatric therapies are delivered primarily through East London Foundation Trust (ELFT), which host Community Health Newham (CHN). There is a specific contract in place for these services separate to the rest of the services provided by ELFT, which includes CAMHS, adult mental health services (including perinatal mental health) and specialist addiction services.
12. The acute hospital providing an accident and emergency service for children is Newham University Hospital Trust. It also provides acute paediatric, maternity and neo-natal unit services.

Safeguarding services

Overall effectiveness

Grade 3 (adequate)

13. The overall effectiveness of safeguarding services in the London Borough of Newham is adequate. The council meets its statutory requirements for the management and delivery of safeguarding services and it is widely understood across all partner agencies that safeguarding children is everyone's business. No service was found to be deteriorating.
14. Improvements have been made in the recognition and management of safeguarding concerns. A challenging programme is being implemented to establish robust governance and accountability arrangements across all partner agencies and to improve the overall effectiveness of the LSCB. Considerable progress has been made in developing the leadership of the board by appointing an independent chair and improving the core membership to ensure members have a strategic role in safeguarding and sufficient seniority in their respective organisations to affect change. The programme has yet to be fully implemented and the impact yet to be demonstrated in terms of ensuring improved safeguarding outcomes for children and young people.
15. The failure to renew some criminal record bureau (CRB) checks for local authority staff in post more than three years has the potential to compromise the safety of children and young people. As a result of the inspector's findings the council has taken immediate remedial action and implemented a new policy to ensure that future checks are carried out in a timely manner. Contracting arrangements across the partnership to safeguard children and young people are robust and include a requirement for all vetting checks to be undertaken by the service provider.
16. The restructuring of children's social care services in 2010 and the redesign of service delivery in 2011 placing a greater emphasis on early intervention and the 'One Family, One Plan' approach to early intervention is informing the development of the new intensive family support service for families. The ambitious aims are at an early stage of development and it is still too early to evaluate the impact and overall effectiveness in improving outcomes for children and young people.
17. Service user engagement is not sufficiently embedded in some areas of practice, children and young people are not as a matter of course invited to attend their child protection case conference meetings. The lack of available advocates means children's views are not routinely sought at these meetings.

18. The council responded effectively to the findings of the unannounced inspection in March 2011 and has made good progress in tackling the areas for development.

Capacity for improvement

Grade 3 (adequate)

19. The capacity for improvement is adequate. Performance information indicates that the council's performance has recently improved but as yet there is no track record of sustained improvement.
20. The on-going restructure of the service and the redesign programme for delivering services have been managed well, by the current interim leadership team, within the constrained financial climate and front line staff feel very engaged in the process. The council is investing in the training and professional development of newly qualified social workers (NOSW) and ensures social work teams have a balance of new and experienced staff. Social workers recognise the financial constraints the council is under but express frustration at the withdrawal of funding for some training, limiting opportunities for professional development. A number of senior managers remain employed on an interim basis which contributes to uncertainty over the future development of the service. A short term strategy is in place to ensure all senior management posts remain covered while a review of the senior management structure takes place in line with the councils overall aim of radically re-thinking how they deliver services.
21. The local authority and its partners have a clear vision and agreed priorities to secure service improvement. They are able to articulate clearly their vision for the future and this is translated well to all staff. However, progress in improving services for children and young people will be dependent on achieving a stable workforce, reducing the number of agency staff employed and ensuring robust retention policies which value the learning and professional development of staff, to ensure children and young people get the best possible service.

Areas for improvement

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

Immediately:

- establish a robust renewal process for CRB checks for those staff who have been in post over three years
- ensure risk assessments are undertaken and are present on personnel files for any new member of staff without a London Borough of Newham CRB check

- clearly record that children are seen alone during child protection investigations.

Within three months:

- improve the quality of assessments ensuring risk and protective factors are clearly identified and that assessments have specific and measurable outcomes to support robust planning
- improve the quality of child protection planning so that families are clear about what needs to change, how this is to be achieved, how the plan will be monitored and the contingency arrangements should the plan prove ineffective
- ensure that children are able to attend their child protection conference and be supported by an advocate if they wish to be
- ensure a clear analysis is undertaken of all complaints received to inform learning and improve services
- ensure the complaints policy is widely advertised to enable all children and young people to make representations if they wish to
- London Borough of Newham, NHS East London and City and ELFT should ensure information regarding children subject to child protection plans and the scheduling of child protection conferences is consistently shared with professionals from the child and family consultation service (CFCS) providing child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS)
- London Borough of Newham should ensure that all children's safeguarding referrals are acknowledged
- NHS East London and City should ensure that the annual reports contain specific, measurable and time limited objectives that drive improvements in children's safeguarding
- London Borough of Newham, NHS East London and City and ELFT to ensure health services for disabled children are coordinated effectively to minimise health interventions and work in partnership with parents of children with disabilities.

Within six months:

- ensure transitional arrangements for young people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties are addressed at an early stage to enable appropriate planning to be in place for their 18th birthday
- develop a shared strategy to ascertain the partnership's effectiveness in delivering domestic violence services

- complete section 11 audits of the safeguarding arrangements across all partner agencies.

Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people

Children and young people are safe and feel safe

Grade 3 (adequate)

23. Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people are adequate. Procedures are in place for the recruitment of all new staff within the children and young people's service. The renewal process for those who have been in post over three years has not been carried out effectively to ensure that all staff who work with children and young people have an up to date Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. Records show that in some cases staff are working up to six months without a satisfactory renewed criminal records check in place. Staff files sampled included two examples of new starters in post without a full CRB check prior to their employment and with no risk assessment on file. The council has taken immediate remedial action to address these issues and a new procedure put in place to ensure that future checks are carried out in a timely manner. Systems are in place to consider any concerns raised through statutory checks with the decisions taken at an appropriate senior level. Contracting arrangements across the partnership to safeguard children and young people are robust and include a requirement for all vetting checks to be undertaken by the service provider.
24. Complaints regarding children's social care services are responded to effectively and within the statutory timescales although there is no clear analysis undertaken from complaints to inform future learning and improve services. Consequently similar issues reoccur in repeat complaints. There is a lack of advocates available to assist children and young people or family members should they wish to make a complaint.
25. The Police rigorously investigate reports of missing children and young people and in all cases undertake a 'safe and sound' visit when the child returns home. For those subject to a child in need or child protection plan or where a child or young person is not previously known to statutory services, notifications to children's social care are reviewed on a case by case basis. However, information from the notifications is not collated and therefore any patterns or themes can be missed, which limits the effectiveness of the partnership to respond proactively to any emerging safeguarding concerns.
26. Formal procedures for children missing from school have yet to be developed. Guidance has been provided to schools and since September 2011 schools are responsible for making initial checks on children missing

from education within 10 days, passing any concerns on to the children's social care duty and assessment team. Some secondary schools employ their own education welfare officers to do this work but in other schools it is less clear who holds this responsibility. The lack of clear procedures results in inconsistent practice across the borough.

27. Effective work by the Behaviour Support Service supports a strong safeguarding focus in schools and within the last year the local authority has supported work in secondary schools relating to homophobic bullying in partnership with Stonewall. The HEART programme is a good initiative to support young people exposed to gang related activity and the potential sexual exploitation of girls in relationships with gang members. A web page giving advice and a helpline to support young people is available to enhance the work of this project.
28. The role of the local authority designated officer (LADO) is well understood across the partnership. The importance of managing allegations against members of the workforce is regularly promoted in safer recruitment training sessions. While referrals are appropriate and come from a wide range of partner agencies, in some cases the correct procedures are not always followed and on occasions some children or members of staff are interviewed inappropriately about the allegation. Where this has occurred the LADO has ensured the referrer is aware of what changes need to be done to improve future practice. Work with faith organisations within the borough has been effective, leading to a greater understanding of the LADO role in safeguarding children and young people. Joint working with commissioners to ensure correct allegation management processes are built into contracting arrangements.
29. Safeguarding arrangements in the local authority fostering and adoption services and private fostering arrangements were all judged to be good at the last inspection. In the three, the staying safe outcome was judged to be good. An overall satisfactory judgement was achieved in the most recent inspection of the council's short break children's home.

Quality of provision

Grade 2 (good)

30. The quality of provision is good. Actions arising from the unannounced inspection in April 2011 have been implemented leading to improved service responsiveness and timeliness of case allocations. All referrals are now responded to within 24 hours of receipt. Thresholds for services are appropriate, agreed and well understood by partner agencies. Robust arrangements are in place for the management of formal child protection processes and these are consistent with statutory guidance and pan-London child protection procedures. Children and young people in need of protection are suitably prioritised and their immediate needs are assessed well by suitably qualified and experienced social workers. The backlog of

children in need cases at the time of the last unannounced inspection has now been significantly reduced and at the time of this inspection there was no unallocated work in the duty and assessment team. Cases are transferred promptly to the relevant longer term teams through weekly transfer meetings. The majority of initial and review child protection conferences are held within timescales.

31. Most initial and core assessments seen by inspectors were thorough, of at least adequate (and in some instances good) quality and most appropriately identified risk and protective factors. However, there was no evidence of research being used to inform assessments. Some plans did not contain sufficiently specific or measurable targets. This makes it difficult for workers and managers to track progress. Case conference, core group and review minutes, although detailed, child-centred and mostly of good quality, also lack a more robust approach to the identification of specific and measurable outcomes for children and young people. Detailed outline child protection plans are drawn up at the conference or review and distributed within 24 hours which is good practice. However, the full minutes are not consistently prepared and distributed in a timely manner.
32. A team of child protection managers and experienced independent reviewing officers (IROs) provides continuity for children. They have oversight of plans between reviews and monitor progress through access to the CareFirst system. The use of the management alert system to raise concerns has been used successfully to challenge drift in both child protection cases and care plans to secure better outcomes for children.
33. Appropriate reports and assessments are provided for case conferences. Most children's social care reports are shared with parents in a timely manner but reports prepared by partner agencies are not seen by parents until shortly before the conference. Parents who met with inspectors said this gives them insufficient time to consider what is being said or to prepare their response.
34. When section 47 strategy discussions are undertaken the majority are held promptly with decisions and appropriate safeguarding actions clearly evidenced. Although children and young people are seen routinely as part of the investigation it is not always clearly recorded whether they have been seen on their own.
35. Children's centres deliver a range of early intervention and preventative services and assessments to support care proceedings and child protection case work. Effective arrangements are in place to provide translation and interpretation services when English is not the first language spoken.
36. Direct work with children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory overall with some good features. There is a strong partnership that includes the full participation of the effective

Parent in Partnership in Newham group which is contributing to service development. Cases reviewed demonstrated good assessment, planning and joint working between children's social care and health. Families are benefitting from direct payments, personalised budgets and respite care, all of which help to maintain the safe care of children and young people within their own homes. However, some children with disabilities experience avoidable delays in the delivery of small daily living aids which compromise their ability to manage independently.

37. Services for young carers are managed through the children's rights group. Positive Vibes is one successful project which developed through an identified need for young people affected or infected by HIV. The group started in 2003 and has developed with 10 young people currently benefitting from the project. They meet monthly at a local youth centre and have an annual residential weekend away. Contributions to World AIDS Day and working alongside the social, religious education coordinator have helped to raise awareness of HIV within the community and in schools. Young people who met with inspectors were able to articulate the value they placed on the project and the confidence it has given them in understanding the issues and helping them to support family members.
38. Transitional arrangements for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities from children's to adults' social care are improving. However, a lack of capacity within adult services prevents transition planning commencing before a young person is 16 years of age.
39. Service responsiveness by the out of hours service is good with timely action taken to safeguard children and young people. There are opportunities for the out of hours team to undertake planned welfare checks for some children subject to child protection plans. Additional management support has been provided to the out of hours team to ensure social workers have access to timely advice and support. Legal advice is readily available to support social workers in the out of hours service in making appropriate decisions. Extensive use is made of Police powers of protection and no clear analysis has been undertaken to understand the reasons for this or whether this is always the most appropriate course of action.

The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe **Grade 3 (adequate)**

40. The contribution of health agencies to safeguarding children is adequate. Health staff across community and acute services are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and are able to identify risks in their daily work with children. Safeguarding referrals to social care are appropriate and copied to the named professional leads within their service, although social care does not consistently acknowledge receipt of the referrals.

41. Information exchange between health and children's social care has improved since the introduction of a secured email service across the partnership but practice remains inconsistent in the way health services are informed about children subject to child protection plans and the dates of child protection conferences. CAMHS are not always aware when children they are working with are subject to child protection procedures and are not routinely invited to case conferences. Remedial action is being taken to improve communication to ensure they are aware of child protection conferences and can contribute to the planning for children in these cases.
42. General practitioners (GPs) are becoming increasingly engaged in safeguarding arrangements, routinely submitting reports to case conferences, although attendance at case conferences is infrequent. Health visitors and school nurses prioritise child protection activity and routinely attend case conferences.
43. Health agencies are well represented on the LSCB and on the health strategy sub group of the safeguarding board, although Newham University Hospital Trust attendance at the executive board meetings is intermittent.
44. Child death overview panel (CDOP) arrangements continue to be strengthened. Lessons learned from serious incidents are applied to improve practice across health services and are reinforced through training. There is more to do, however, to deliver on improvement objectives set by the CDOP last year. Membership of the CDOP does not yet include all key agencies at a sufficiently senior level to make organisational decisions and ensure they are implemented. There is scope to further strengthen communication between the LSCB and the CDOP with front line health staff although specific case briefing processes are in place.
45. There is effective leadership, advice and guidance from the designated doctor and designated nurse consultant who are well regarded across the service. The last health safeguarding annual report, while giving a comprehensive view of the year's performance, did not set specific and measurable objectives to drive service improvement for the coming year.
46. In provider services (ELFT and NUHT), named professionals have high visibility, deliver training, regular supervision to staff groups and individual workers and provide sound safeguarding advice and support. An action plan is in place at the University Hospital to improve performance on the delivery of safeguarding training.
47. Regular psycho-social multi-agency meetings held at Newham University Health Trust (NUHT) and the sexual health clinic are very effective and are highly valued by community health and social care staff. These are contributing significantly to improved early identification of needs ensuring

children can receive early intervention by specialist services. Joint planning at a strategic level and on a case by case basis to address concerns for unborn babies is good. Referrals for Down's Syndrome are being made at an earlier stage enabling specialist support to do in-reach work with the baby and parents before discharge into the community. Speech and language therapists are operating more responsive in-reach services to neonatal babies where issues are identified early.

48. There is a wide range of good quality health services for young people which include sexual health, children and families counselling, substance misuse services and specialist maternity services for vulnerable young women under 20. The pathway for young people needing mental health assessments at the acute hospital is clear and works effectively, supported by the paediatric liaison team. There is good provision for young people needing in-patient psychiatric care and in the past five years no young person has been admitted to an adult bed unless they needed a secure placement. Well established protocols are in place for children and young people who have been the victims of sexual assault, two consultant paediatricians provide regular on call support and a high quality child protection sexual health service is available within the borough to those young people not requiring forensic examinations.
49. Liaison across health services with the hospital social work team is effective with evidence of joint work. Practitioners report some inconsistency in follow up of non-attendance at health appointments across a number of services and a review is underway to improve this.
50. While parents of children with disabilities are very positive about the services their children receive from the specialist multi-disciplinary team at the child development centre, they do not feel that health services always coordinate activity well to minimise medical interventions for their children and they lack confidence in how well school staff understand and are able to meet their child's individual, often complex, needs.
51. Work is underway to develop a workforce plan to address shortage of capacity within the health visiting service and deliver 2015 national targets which require a significant increase in workforce numbers.

Ambition and prioritisation

Grade 2 (good)

52. Ambition and prioritisation are good with significant recent improvements being made to service delivery. Restructuring the children and young people's directorate to deliver a redesigned children's service has been the most significant priority for the borough in 2011/2012. The redesign programme started in June 2010 and the council, through the CYPP 2011/2012 and the informal consultation paper regarding senior management arrangements "a fit for purpose council", recognises that the

next step in the journey is to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people in the context of reduced budgets and a reduced workforce. A new model for service delivery has been developed with a greater emphasis on 'building capacity, personal and community resilience and independence and early intervention and prevention'. The creation of early intervention teams and the development of a range of intensive support programmes offers opportunities for working with families at the point difficulties become known and to prevent problems escalating. The 'One Family, One Plan' approach is in its embryonic stage and the impact of the redesign programme can not yet be fully evaluated in terms of outcomes for children and families. However the enthusiasm from staff - 'these are exciting times' - and their feeling of being engaged in the consultation process demonstrate the vision and commitment by senior managers and elected members for the development of the service which is shared across the workforce.

53. The third Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2010 report produced by NHS Newham and social care sets out the key priorities for the partnership and demonstrates that senior managers know the area, the demographic profile and where the gaps in service are. Effective planning is underway to secure better outcomes for all children and young people within Newham.

Leadership and management

Grade 3 (adequate)

54. Leadership and management are adequate. Following a diagnostic report by external consultants in March 2010, where serious weaknesses were found in the way the LSCB carried out a number of its core functions, the board set out a challenging programme to implement the recommendations of the review. This included significant changes in its governance and accountability arrangements across all partner agencies to achieve improvements in the overall effectiveness of the LSCB. Some progress has been made but the changes have yet to be fully implemented and the impact yet to be demonstrated in terms of ensuring improved safeguarding outcomes for children and young people. The statutory Section 11 audit programme of safeguarding arrangements across partner agencies commenced in December 2010 and is due for completion by the end of 2011. The council acknowledges there were delays in starting the process and is working hard to complete the programme to ensure the findings inform future practice.
55. Workforce planning is adequate. Newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) carry a 10% reduction in caseload to enable them to have study days, additional supervision and training. This comprehensive support package offered to NQSWs shows the council recognises the importance of the contribution newly qualified staff can make to workforce development. The reliance on agency staff is slowly being reduced and some are being offered permanent contracts. Building a sustainable and highly effective

workforce is a key priority for the council. However the opportunities for some staff to achieve professional qualifications have been reduced and the 'grow your own' programme has ceased. These changes add to the challenge of succession planning for a stable workforce.

Performance management and quality assurance

Grade 3 (adequate)

56. Performance management and quality assurance are adequate. Quality assurance processes are in place, however they are not always used effectively to improve practice. For example, within children's social care, the response from line managers in June 2011 to audit supervision files was poor, 49 audits were sent to managers with only seven returned. The low return means outcomes from the audits cannot be systematically drawn together and evaluated to provide a holistic overview of the quality of managerial support, decision making and practice guidance to social work staff. A follow up audit of supervision was undertaken in October and showed the response rate was much improved from front line managers, enabling senior managers to begin to use information more effectively to improve practice and management oversight in case work. A spot check was undertaken by the council on visits and core group contact with children subject to child protection plans which identified 98% of social work child protection visits occurred in line with minimum timescales, however nearly 18% of children were not visited in accordance with the requirements of their child protection plan. The council could not demonstrate what action it was taking to improve this area of poor practice.
57. The performance and quality assurance (POA) sub group of the LSCB receives performance reports and commissions audits to ensure performance and practice are monitored and accountable to the LSCB. Improvements in performance targets are reported through the monthly data sets and disseminated to all managers. At a corporate and strategic level the importance of performance data is well understood and is used effectively to inform practice and service development. For example, performance to meet the 15 working days from the strategy discussion to the initial child protection case conference is scrutinised closely on a regular basis and reported to the Chief Executive. Child protection plans reaching the nine month review stage are all scrutinised by a multi-agency panel to avoid drift. There has been a significant reduction in the number of children and young people on child protection plans over three years within the last 12 months, from 12 children in December 2010 to two children in October 2011, which is showing the effectiveness of the panel in ensuring action is taken to minimise drift for children on a plan.
58. Performance management at an operational level is improving and consistent ways of collecting data across Newham are being developed, for example all managers now have real-time access to performance data

relating to the timeliness of completion of initial and core assessments and reviews. This enables managers to monitor the performance of their team and individual workers to ensure casework is completed in a timely manner, to minimise drift and improve safeguarding outcomes for children and young people.

Partnership working

Grade 3 (adequate)

59. Partnership working is adequate. Partnership working in Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is adequate, with evidence of appropriate assessments, actions and outcomes for most families. However, the children's social care service has not been consistently represented at the monthly MARAC meetings and this limits the effectiveness and timeliness of appropriate planning. The council is now taking action to address this issue.
60. Staff from all agencies in both the statutory and voluntary sector are aware of the risks to children in domestic abuse cases and services take effective steps to protect children and young people. Notifications about domestic abuse from the Police are shared on a daily basis with health and children's social care and appropriate actions are agreed. The Asian women's project provides emotional well-being support for young women in volatile relationships and is promoted in schools to help raise awareness of the issues of abusive relationships and the services available to support them. However, there is no overall coordination of services to tackle domestic abuse available across the range of services and agencies. A shared strategy has yet to be developed and information collected and collated to enable the partnership to target resources, measure impact and ascertain the partnership's effectiveness in delivering domestic violence services.
61. Effective and collaborative working arrangements are in place with the independent sector to ensure there is a suitable range of services available for families, children and young people. The constraints on budgets and the changes being made to the commissioning arrangements have led to some difficult decisions being made about which services are to be retained, and relationships between the council and the independent sector have been strained. The council is closely evaluating the impact of services on outcomes for children and young people to ensure it is getting a best value return for the money being invested. Some contracts have been terminated and a review of services supported through the Early Intervention Grant is underway.
62. Some members of the independent sector are unclear whether private and voluntary organisations are represented on the LSCB or its sub groups and are unclear how to raise issues about safeguarding arrangements for

children and young people. A representative of the independent sector has recently joined the LSCB. The private and voluntary sector is represented on the Children's Trust and is fully engaged in this forum.

Services for looked after children

Overall effectiveness

Grade 3 (adequate)

63. The overall effectiveness of services for looked after children, young people and care leavers is adequate. Elected members with lead roles for children in care take their responsibilities seriously. They meet with young people and are working hard to achieve the ambitious aims of a refreshed corporate parenting strategy. However the Corporate Parenting board's potential to influence service design and delivery has not yet been fully realised. The participation of looked after children in service design is in its infancy and needs to be more robust to ensure children and young people feel they can contribute and influence services which affect them.
64. A clear strategy and action plan sets out the council's strategy to reduce the high numbers of looked after children and young people, to improve outcomes for this group and reduce placement costs. The strategy is now starting to have a measurable impact and 2010 was the first year Newham did not have the highest number of looked after children in its comparator group. However, of those children looked after, too many (over 65%) continue to be placed out of borough due to the shortage of in-house foster carers. Resource deficits are understood and effective commissioning of placements is improving, with collaborative links being made with East London Solutions in exploring joint commissioning arrangements to secure lower unit cost for placements.
65. Young care leavers were positive about the levels of support they receive and the skills they learn through a number of workshops they can attend but remain sharply critical about the quality of accommodation allocated to them. Information provided by the council shows that 18 looked after young people over 16 years of age are in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation. Providing sufficient suitable accommodation of a good quality and in safe areas remains a challenge for the council in securing better outcomes for young care leavers.
66. The newly appointed interim head teacher of the virtual school has established a strategy for improvement based firmly on outcomes for looked after children. The children looked after support project (CLASP) is working on the development of a comprehensive data programme for looked after children educated outside Newham. Recognising that 65% of Newham children are educated out of borough, this is a particularly important area of development.

67. The local authority and partner agencies demonstrate effective leadership in promoting the welfare of children across the service through the Children's Trust board. Local priorities are known and acted up on through the Trust board; membership is at an appropriate senior level within the represented organisation. Inspectors observed a meeting of the board which was skilfully chaired and engaged all participants in the discussions. Challenge was evident and success and improvement was openly celebrated. Services are held to account for delivering on the identified priorities. Non-members were welcomed to present reports and updates on progress on key areas of services delivery. The agenda is forward planning and enables partner agencies to table business items.

Capacity for improvement

Grade 3 (adequate)

68. The capacity to improve services for looked after children and care leavers is adequate. Council leaders and senior managers are clear about the priorities for looked after children and care leavers. Performance data shows the council's performance has recently improved but as yet there is no track record of sustained improvement. Performance indicators for placement stability for looked after children show that short term and long term stability are beginning to improve. Action is being taken to improve the offending rates of young people with a sustained approach to diverting them away from criminal activities and gang culture. Programmes to support safer communities and projects to support young people in reducing the risk of involvement are in place.
69. The lack of suitable good quality accommodation in sufficient numbers to secure better living arrangements for all care leavers presents the council and its partner agencies with a significant challenge. Some progress has been made and senior managers are taking more robust action with housing agencies to ensure the current living standards of those young people in independent living are improved and basic amenities provided. Increasing the capacity of stock available will reduce the risk of young care leavers living in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Areas for improvement

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

Immediately:

- London Borough of Newham, NHS East London and City and ELFT should ensure that there is effective exchange of information regarding the health and social care needs of individual looked after children and young people.

Within three months:

- increase the membership of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and ensure members meet regularly with elected members and senior managers of the council and have the opportunity to influence services which affect them
- adopt and implement widely 'The Pledge' to ensure all looked after children are clear about the role and responsibility corporate parents have towards their care and what they can expect from the council in terms of support and care, and future provision for care leavers
- increase the participation of all looked after children and young people in service design and service delivery to enable them to make a greater contribution to the services they need to meet their needs
- review the way the council celebrates the achievements of children and young people
- clarify how looked after children and young people and their carers can access concessionary admission to the borough's leisure facilities
- ensure all children in care have the benefit of life story work, and further input is needed to ensure all children in care and care leavers have a good understanding of their personal history
- NHS East London and City and ELFT should ensure that a full range of targeted health promotion and preventative services are in place for looked after children
- London Borough of Newham NHS East London and City and ELFT should ensure that care leavers receive comprehensive health and social care information
- NHS East London and City and ELFT should review the governance arrangements to ensure the health needs of all looked after children are identified and met and enable young people to be fully engaged in the development, delivery and quality assurance of health services
- NHS East London and City and ELFT should ensure that young people are participating in the assessment and review of their health needs and monitoring their personal development as fully as possible.

Within six months:

- provide suitable accommodation for all care leavers in safe areas, in a good state of repair and with sufficient amenities to meet their daily needs

- develop user friendly pathway planning documents to ensure they are more easily understood by young people.

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

Being healthy

Grade 3 (adequate)

71. Health outcomes for looked after children and young people are adequate. A significant number of looked after children live out of the borough and the monitoring of how well their health needs are being identified and addressed is underdeveloped. The looked after children's nurses are not invited to out of borough looked after annual health reviews and there is no evidence on the health record that the out of area health professional attends the review. The quality of the assessments undertaken is variable and the voice and sense of the individual child does not always come through. The looked after children health team cannot always be confident about how involved the child has been in the review of their health needs. The looked after children's nurses generate the health plan based on the information supplied by out of area health practitioners and there is no robust approach to ensuring the plan is meeting the child's needs effectively.
72. Key social care information such as minutes of reviews, pathway plans and strengths and difficulties questionnaires (SDQs) are not routinely shared with health professionals and the health records do not include sufficient social care information although the looked after children nurses do have access to the IT systems used within the respective organisations, RiO and Carefirst, the computer information systems used within the two organisations. Action is now being taken to address this gap to ensure health professionals have the full range of social care information available to enable them to map the child's emotional and personal development year on year or to engage the child in the process.
73. The looked after children health annual report for 2010/11 does not contain sufficiently specific and measurable objectives, lacks detailed reporting on impact and outcomes for young people and contains some inaccurate data which is being addressed through joint work with the children's social care service.
74. Performance on the quality and timeliness of annual health assessments is positive and shows significant improvement over recent years. Similarly, there is positive performance on health outcomes for looked after children for immunisations and dental checks and particularly for emotional health, which has improved over the last two years and is now just below the England average. The looked after children nurses are proactive in trying to engage young people who are reluctant to attend health reviews,

sending reminder texts, visiting them at home and providing them with age appropriate health information, offering an open invitation for health support and advice. Young people have a positive view of the approaches used to encourage them to attend their health reviews.

75. Some specialist services for looked after children are in place and deliver positive outcomes; these include CAMHS provided by the child and family consultation service (CFCS), sexual health support through services including Shine and the contraceptive specialist nurse.
76. Looked after children with identified substance misuse can be fast tracked to the universal substance misuse service. However, there is no specialist preventative or treatment service for looked after children. Work with early intervention teams is at an early stage to develop commissioning intentions on preventative services which will include this service gap.
77. Final health reviews are not consistently well coordinated with the looked after children review. The looked after children nurses do provide a range of good quality age appropriate health information to children in care. Care leavers receive health information at their last health assessment before leaving care but a number of care leavers told inspectors they do not feel they have sufficient useful health information. There is no care leavers' health information pack, although work has begun on the development of a 'credit card' type information card. However young care leavers have not yet been involved in this work and looked after children and young people generally are not yet sufficiently engaged in the development, delivery and quality assurance of health services.

Staying safe

Grade 2 (good)

78. The arrangements for ensuring that looked after children and young people are safe are good. There is a strong commitment to ensure children enter and remain in care only when this is in their best interests. The weekly multi-disciplinary threshold of care (TOC) panel promotes a creative approach to safe child-centred planning and, through careful consideration of alternatives and the assessment of risk and protective factors, is contributing to a steady fall in numbers of children who enter care.
79. For those children who do need to enter care the placement and matching service (PAMS) is effective, providing a single point of referral for advice on all placement issues. This is valued by staff as a means to identify placements which meet children's needs, and inspectors saw examples of positive outcomes for children as a result of careful matching through this approach. Given the diversity of the borough, emphasis is placed on making the right cultural match for children, where this is not possible cases sampled showed foster carers demonstrated a willingness to learn through effective training about different cultures and practices. This supports the council in improving the stability of placements for children

and young people which is proving effective. Permanence for children is actively promoted and reflected in the steady rates of adoption and the increasing use of Special Guardianship and Residence Orders.

80. Where placements are fragile and at risk of an unplanned ending a range of services are available to support carers. Carers who spoke with inspectors felt well informed about individual children's safeguarding needs and had valued the training which had enabled them to respond appropriately. The looked after children nurses health care team provide training on a range of health care issues for foster carers both during their induction as new carers and as part of their on-going professional development. Training includes issues around sexual health, drugs and substance misuse and healthy eating, and opportunities to explore these issues is also available to social workers, staff in residential units and young people in care. Foster carers understood the importance of continuity for children and spoke of maintaining contact with them. The benefit of this sustained support was confirmed by care leavers, some of whom had experienced many changes of social worker and valued ongoing links with their foster families as they have entered adult life.
81. A multi-agency 'step down' panel is used well as a forum to develop plans which enable children to move safely from specialist or out of borough provision to placements within their own community. Focus on family reunification is seen as an important aspect in supporting children and young people to return home in a planned, coordinated and safe way. A focused programme to support this approach has been commissioned from the NSPCC. The programme is in the early stages of implementation but it is recognised by managers as a critical development in preventing children spending too long in care and reducing the numbers of looked after children in a positive way with the support of their families.
82. In the survey distributed to looked after children as part of the inspection, the large majority reported that it was easy to contact their social worker or key worker and most felt that, overall, their care was good or better.
83. The needs of unaccompanied asylum seeking children are appropriately addressed. They are accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 and afforded the full rights of looked after children. The use of interpreters is widely available to support them and assessments show their needs are given careful consideration.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 3 (adequate)

84. Educational outcomes for looked after children, young people and care leavers are adequate. The newly appointed interim head teacher of the virtual school has used his knowledge and skills to quickly establish a strategy for improvement based firmly on outcomes for looked after children. The CLASP is working on the development of a comprehensive data programme, Work Flow Management (WFM), which links with the

main social care recording system and provides clear information on individuals and analysis of performance across the service. Though still in development, parts of the system are in use and include information on the educational progress made by an individual looked after child or young person, both in Newham and in other areas. This data, on a range of aspects including interests and extra curricular activities, is developing into a powerful tool and enables advisory teachers to have clear background information through which to support the pupils in local schools and further afield. Through analysis of the information provided and visits to pupils in their schools, CLASP staff have clear information on looked after children educated outside Newham. This is a particularly important part of the service as 60% of looked after children for whom the council is responsible are educated in schools in other authorities. The plans to develop training for designated teachers are rightly placing an increasing emphasis on monitoring the academic, as well as the social and emotional development, of looked after children.

85. Most looked after children and young people have an up to date personal education plan which is a significant increase in 2011 compared to previous years. However, the effective use of these is variable. Young people told inspectors that, when their school involved them fully in the development of the plan, it was an effective tool in supporting progress in their learning and personal development. Where the plan did not involve the young person it was not as successful in achieving the desired outcome.
86. Young people are funded to undertake a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities including one to one tuition. Universal programmes are also available for looked after children, for example, through the provision in the Newham Summer School. There is access to a range of leisure activities for looked after children and young people, although there is some confusion among carers about their entitlement to concessionary admission rates which prevent them from taking full advantage of the facilities available to them and the children they look after. The confusion extends to health care partners who refer care leavers for a free or concessionary admission rates leisure pass on the basis of an identified health need only. The outcome is that professionals, carers, children and young people are all confused about access to leisure facilities.
87. The attendance of looked after children and young people has generally improved over the last four years. At the time of the inspection, the latest data for autumn 2011 shows that, for around the 70% of looked after children with updated information on the WFM database, most achieved an attendance rate equal to or greater than the virtual school's threshold target level. Systems are in place to trigger intervention when the attendance rate falls below the threshold with follow up work by education and social care staff. There are few permanent exclusions of looked after children and young people. The proportion of fixed term exclusions is

broadly in line with the national average for those in care and is due to the effective protocol operated by head teachers in Newham which provides managed moves to other schools and settings, including pupil referral units, for those in danger of exclusion.

88. There are year on year fluctuations in attainment at Key Stage 2 but, over time, outcomes in English and mathematics are broadly in line with national figures for looked after children. Results at GCSE have shown a steady trend of improvement over the last few years. For example, in 2010, the latest year for comparative figures, the percentage of looked after children achieving five GCSEs at A*-C including English and mathematics was 15% compared to the national average of 12%. The invalidated results for 2011 show further improvement although comparative data is not yet available. The outcomes for five higher grade GCSEs also show this improving profile and both measures represent a satisfactory closing of the gap in performance between looked after children and all Year 11 students in the authority. There are examples of strong alternative provision for looked after children through, for example, the New Directions Key Stage 4 programmes which provide a range of courses leading to academic and vocational qualifications. However, taken overall, performance measures show that educational outcomes for looked after children within the authority are broadly in line with national figures.

Making a positive contribution, including user engagement

Grade 3 (adequate)

89. Outcomes for looked after children and young people in making a positive contribution are adequate. The Children in Care Council (CiCC) does not have systematic procedures in place to enable all children and young people to play a full and active part in shaping and reviewing the services offered to them. Currently, the CiCC is made up of a group of young people who have used or who are using the advocacy service. In the survey of looked after children around two thirds reported that they had not heard of the CiCC. Young people who met inspectors confirmed this. Consequently looked after children and young people have limited opportunities to play an active part in council matters that affect them and their care. Looked after children and young people have been supported in developing 'The Pledge' which sets out what they can expect from the council in terms of service provision but there is limited information about how corporate parents are accountable for the services outlined in The Pledge. The Pledge is still in draft form and it is unclear why there has been a delay in formally adopting it and distributing it widely to ensure all looked after children are clear about the role and responsibility the council has in its capacity as corporate parent.
90. It is acknowledged by senior staff and social workers that the participation agenda is still at an early stage in its development. Where young people have been involved in activities they have had positive experiences and

highly valued the opportunities afforded to them. Care leavers have contributed to staff training and interviews and are represented on the fostering panel. However opportunities are being missed to engage with young people at a critical time when the council is restructuring and redesigning service delivery.

91. Events to celebrate children's achievements have not taken place for two years which means that opportunities are missed for corporate parents to meet with and congratulate children and young people on their successes. In the current financial climate the council know they need to be more creative to ensure achievements are celebrated without incurring high costs. Consultation with looked after children and young people and their carers would assist elected members in deciding how best they can recommence celebratory events.
92. Complaints regarding children's social care services are handled effectively and are responded to within the statutory timescales of 20 working days. Of the looked after children and young people who responded to the pre-inspection survey less than half reported that they knew how to make a complaint and 64% either did not know what an advocate was or, for those that did, how to access one. Similarly some parents who contributed to the inspection reported not knowing about the complaints procedure and one parent commented that if she needed an advocate she 'would have to get a solicitor'. Advocacy is effective for those young people who contact the Children's Rights Service. Those young people who met with inspectors and had used the service valued it highly. However, the service is overstretched and struggles to develop and sustain regular feedback to corporate parents. Survey evidence shows that some two thirds of the looked after children responding did not know, or were not sure, how to contact an independent reviewing officer (IRO). Children are allocated to an independent visitor where this is appropriate.
93. A range of tactics are used to address the behaviour of looked after young people who offend. Intensive targeted support programmes help divert them away from criminal and gang activities. Custodial sentences are used as a last resort and for those young people in custody joint working arrangements between the youth offending team and the looked after children services are in place ensuring appropriate levels of support and contact are maintained and plans in place to support them upon release.

Economic well-being

Grade 3 (adequate)

94. Outcomes for looked after children and young people to achieve economic well-being are adequate. The leaving care team works with young people from 18 to 24 years of age and is highly committed to helping young people meet their aspirations. A high proportion of care leavers have an up to date pathway plan and these demonstrate some involvement by the young person in the planning and review process. Plans reflect cultural

and specific needs. However, the overall impact of the plans is variable because they are not easily understood by the young people themselves.

95. During the inspection young people were positive about the support for independent living which is developed through a range of workshops covering issues including housing and benefits, general and sexual health, lifestyle and resilience and education. However, although the performance indicator suggests that almost all young people are in suitable accommodation, care leavers themselves were sharply critical about the quality of some commissioned accommodation. They noted issues such as delays in completion of repairs and the lack of some basic amenities such as a washing machine. Information provided by the council shows that 18 looked after young people over 16 years of age are in temporary bed and breakfast accommodation. This is inadequate provision. Senior managers are aware of the concerns of young care leavers and are now responding and negotiating with housing agencies to secure better living standards for them.
96. The proportion of looked after young people in education, employment and training has increased over the last five years and latest figures show this to be above the national average. Focused support with partners including Connexions ensures that the 14-19 curriculum for care leavers offers an appropriate range of vocational options. Young people spoke positively about the work placements with the council during the schools' summer break and the extended placements through the youth projects. They appreciated the opportunities to develop work skills. However, both of these schemes have been discontinued.
97. Effective support is provided to the high number of care leavers who are at university; the figure currently stands at 45 young people. The leaving care team has developed specific support for those preparing to apply for higher education. Young people spoke of the continuing support of their foster carers and the financial arrangements provided by the council that enable them to continue studying in higher education.
98. The location of the leaving care team within the main Newham Council offices means that they are not readily accessible to young people. Outreach workers and the young people themselves report that it is sometimes difficult to travel to the office. The imposing building and the lack of comfortable interview rooms means it is not always suitable to provide and receive guidance and support in such surroundings. This limits the capacity of the leaving care team to provide effective support to care leavers. The local authority are aware of these concerns and plans are in place to move the leaving care team to more suitable offices.

Quality of provision

Grade 3 (adequate)

99. The quality of provision for looked after children and young people is adequate. A range of early intervention services including flexible outreach

support from the CAMHS and the family group conferencing service has contributed to a drop, over the past three years, in the numbers entering and remaining in care, and those who become subject to care proceedings.

100. Approximately 65% of children in Newham's care are placed out of the borough, and some of the most vulnerable children and young people are with specialist providers which are a considerable distance away. This is poor practice in terms of securing value for money and the capacity to sustain appropriate contact and support. In accordance with the council's sufficiency strategy to reduce the number of children living outside of the borough regular recruitment drives are undertaken to increase the number of in house foster carers. A recent recruitment drive has seen a significant gain of 10 approved foster carers recruited since April 2011 and a further 24 awaiting checks or assessment. However there remains a continuing shortfall in placements for teenagers and for babies and high numbers are placed in the independent sector. The authority has improved the speed and quality of assessments for prospective carers including those who are applying for Special Guardianship and Residence Orders, and those who are kinship carers.
101. The choice of accommodation for care leavers is poor. Accommodation is often situated in unsafe areas and is generally of poor quality and lacking in basic amenities. Senior managers are aware of this and are responding to the requests of care leavers for better support packages when they leave care and for more suitable accommodation that meets their needs. Officers from the Housing and Public Protection Service attended a recent children and young people's scrutiny committee meeting to enable elected members to understand the housing needs of care leavers and the challenges faced in attempting to meet their needs. The meeting also looked at some of the reasons behind, and the measures in place to tackle, youth disaffection in Newham including residential insecurity and homelessness. In working alongside community and cultural organisations elected members recognised this would support the council in ensuring there were sufficient resources and support programmes to help young people. They recognised the gap in suitable accommodation within the borough and the challenge in making connections with young people and reported through the meeting the priority was to address the problems faced by young care leavers and the increasing number of homeless 16 and 17 year olds.
102. Assessments of the needs of children and young people who become looked after are generally of good quality, involve other professionals appropriately and indicate that direct work with children has taken place. They address the particular needs of children and take into account their disability, cultural and religious needs. However in some case files the voice of the child is not clearly recorded, and it is unclear how their views have contributed to assessments and care plans. Plans for children who

have entered care through court proceedings are comprehensive and informed by thorough assessment of need. However care plans for children who have been in longer term care are generally not recorded in a stand alone document which can be printed off and read by children and their carers. Reports to, and minutes from, statutory reviews show that care plans are discussed and developed and reflect children's changing needs. However, while children who met inspectors were clear about their care plan, more than half of those surveyed reported that they did not know what was in their care plan. Access to legal advice is good and effective liaison with the local courts means that where intervention is needed cases are progressed effectively.

103. Carers who were seen by inspectors were committed to their role and had good levels of insight into the challenges they are helping children to overcome. However older children who met inspectors had not all had the benefit of life story work, and further input is needed to ensure all children in care and care leavers have a good understanding of their personal history.
104. Information to help children and care leavers understand what being in care and leaving care is about and what they can expect from service providers is in draft form. This initiative is at an early stage and the information is not currently available to the young people who need it. An opportunity to help them understand what is happening to them and what they can expect when they enter or leave care is being lost.

Ambition and prioritisation

Grade 2 (good)

105. The ambition and prioritisation of the council and its partners for looked after children and care leavers are good with significant recent improvements being made to service delivery. Elected members and officers of the council and partner agencies understand their role as corporate parents with a clear vision that is translated to all staff through agreed priorities for looked after children. Elected members with lead roles for children in care work hard to achieve the ambitious aims of a refreshed corporate parenting strategy. However the corporate parenting board's potential to impact service design and delivery has not yet been fully realised and further work is needed to ensure children's views are regularly heard by all councillors to inform service development.
106. Priorities for looked after children are clearly set out in strategic and operational plans and are known and shared by staff across the partnership. Written documents set out ambitious plans to reduce the numbers of children and young people who enter or remain in care and how best this can be achieved. Targets are appropriately challenging and have resulted in improving trends.
107. The needs profile of children in care is well understood and is supporting the council in the redesign of services for children and young people and

in recruitment campaigns for foster carers which are designed to attract carers for specific groups of children. The drive to increase numbers of Newham carers is beginning to have impact, with a significant net gain in 2010. Foster carers report good levels of support from their supervising social workers and are highly committed to the children they care for. A forum for local carers, 'Fostering United Newham' has been launched to improve channels of communication between carers and senior managers.

Leadership and management

Grade 3 (adequate)

108. The leadership and management arrangements for looked after children and young people are adequate. Full participation and engagement with children and young people through all the respective management boards and panels is at an early stage of development. The CiCC does not involve a wide group of looked after young people and many of these are not fully engaged with the council's current improvement agenda.
109. The Children's Trust board demonstrates effective leadership in promoting the welfare of children across the service. Local priorities are known and acted upon and membership is at an appropriate senior level within the represented organisation. Meetings are skilfully chaired and engage all participants in the discussions. Challenge is evident; success and improvement are openly celebrated and services are held to account for delivering the identified priorities.
110. The chair of the children and young people scrutiny committee demonstrates extensive knowledge and understanding of the council's key priorities and the needs of children and young people who live in the area. Minutes of meetings are detailed and show services are held to account, with councillors asking for demonstrable examples of where services have improved outcomes for children and young people and, where they have not, what action is being taken to improve the service or support the young person in achieving better outcomes.
111. Resource deficits are understood and effective commissioning of placements is improving, with collaborative links being made with East London Solutions in exploring joint commissioning arrangements to secure lower unit cost for placements. The procurement work is seeking to find value for money through contracts that deliver high quality services at competitive prices.
112. The monitoring of health needs for looked after children and young people in out of authority placements is underdeveloped. Partner agencies have not responded quickly enough to ensure that some of the most vulnerable children placed some distance out of borough are receiving appropriate health care.
113. Workforce planning is adequate and plans are in place to create a stable workforce. The restructure and redesign programme has created

opportunities for change in social work practice in how families and children can be best supported and social workers have embraced this. However, the opportunities for some staff to achieve professional qualifications have been reduced and the 'grow your own' programme has ceased which adds to the challenge of how the council will secure and retain social work staff.

114. The young people's board whose membership includes looked after children is a dynamic and enthusiastic group of young people who meet with senior managers to influence service delivery. The young people have been involved in inspecting and giving feedback on the sexual health services available to young people within the borough, developing and presenting workshops for primary school children on obesity and supporting the wider agenda in reducing levels of obesity in children and young people, and sitting on interview panels for senior managers. Young people who met inspectors were able to articulate the vision of the council and believe "the council were trying their best to keep us safe".

Performance management and quality assurance

Grade 3 (adequate)

115. Performance management and quality assurance for looked after children and young people are adequate. The children and young people's scrutiny committee and the Children's Trust regularly receives and scrutinises management information. The looked after children reduction strategy and action plan aims to reduce the high numbers of looked after children and young people, to improve outcomes for this group and reduce placement costs. Performance indicators show the reduction strategy is now having a measurable impact with an improving picture emerging and lower number of children and young people entering care. However, of those children looked after, too many (over 65%) continue to be placed out of borough due to the shortage of in-house foster carers. The stability of placements for children and young people is showing an improving picture but remains slightly higher than its comparators.
116. Looked after children are placed in settings judged to be satisfactory or better and commissioned services are regularly monitored through the inspection process and monitoring of the contract arrangements.
117. Case files are audited and action taken to improve practice. A recent audit of care plans for looked after children show only 84% were completed and further work is being undertaken to increase the compliance rate to ensure the findings contribute to an improvement in practice.

Record of main findings:

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