

Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services

North Tyneside

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Age group: All

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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	9
Children and young people are safe and feel safe	9
Quality of provision	10
The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe	12
Ambition and prioritisation	15
Leadership and management	16
Performance management and quality assurance	18
Partnership working	19
Services for looked after children	21
Overall effectiveness	21
Capacity for improvement	22
How good are outcomes for looked after children and care leavers?	24
Being healthy	24
Staying safe	26
Enjoying and achieving	27
Making a positive contribution, including user engagement	29
Economic well-being	30
Quality of provision	31
Ambition and prioritisation	34
Leadership and management	35
Performance management and quality assurance	36
Record of main findings	38

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 44 children and young people, 39 parents and carers, 10 foster carers and adopters, front line staff and managers, senior officers including the Director of Children's Services and the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, elected members and a range of community representatives
 - analysing and evaluating reports from a variety of sources including a review of the Children and Young People's Plan, performance data, 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 60 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 September 2010
 - interviews and focus groups with front line professionals, managers and senior staff from NHS North of Tyne, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation 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. North Tyneside is a Metropolitan Borough located on the North East coast of England, part of the wider Tyneside conurbation. The borough is compact, covering only 31.8 square miles. The main population centres are located on the east coast and north bank of the Tyne, with the north of the borough comprising villages and agricultural land. The borough's population has stabilised following a period of decline and currently stands at 198,478. The 0-17 years population stood at 39,700 in mid 2010. The majority of residents are from a White British background; however North Tyneside has a rapidly growing Black and Ethnic Minority population, accounting for 7.2% of the population overall.
5. North Tyneside is a borough of considerable diversity, with some of the most deprived neighbourhoods nationally located in close proximity to some more affluent. The majority of families experiencing poverty tend to be concentrated in the deprived communities lining the banks of the Tyne, where child poverty rates exceed 30% in some wards.
6. North Tyneside has retained its Children's Trust arrangement under the Children, Young People and Learning Partnership (CYPL) Board which provides strategic direction for children and young people's services. The Board's focus is on improving outcomes for children and young people, particularly the most vulnerable and includes senior representatives from North Tyneside Council, the Health economy, Northumbria Police, schools, further education providers, voluntary and community sector organisations, the local area children's strategy groups and Jobcentre Plus.
7. The North Tyneside Local Safeguarding Children Board brings together representatives from all the key agencies and professionals in the borough responsible for safeguarding children and young people. The Board is led by an Independent Chair, as is the Case Review sub group.
8. North Tyneside Children's Services were rated as performing well in 2009 and in 2010 judged as performing excellently, a position maintained in 2011. All judgements for safeguarding in children's centres and children's residential units are rated 'good' or better. All schools have positive ratings for safeguarding; 90% being rated good or better and none rated less than satisfactory. The adoption service was rated as 'good' by Ofsted in 2011 and the fostering service is rated as 'outstanding'. Specialist education provision, including the two pupil referral units and special schools, are consistently rated 'good' or better.

9. North Tyneside has 77 schools, comprising of one nursery, 56 primary schools (including eight first schools), 15 secondary schools (including four middle schools) and five local authority maintained special schools. In addition, there are two pupil referral units. Early Years childcare provision is delivered through 20 private, voluntary and independent sector settings and eight local authority maintained settings, in addition to playgroups, out-of-school clubs and childminders.
10. The majority of provision for the Under 5's is rated 'good' or 'outstanding' and children are well prepared for school. Outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including those for children from low income families, show good improvement. The large majority of primary, secondary and specialist schools are judged as 'good' or 'outstanding' and 17 year olds are more likely to be in education, employment or training than in other local authority areas.
11. As at February 2012, the numbers of children and young people looked after has increased rapidly to 291 (73.4 per 10,000) of which 58% were male and 42% were female. Conversely, the number of children and young people who were the subject of a child protection plan has recently reduced from 196 in December 2011 to 167 in February 2012.
12. Commissioning and planning of health services and primary care are carried out by North Tyneside Teaching Primary Care Trust (PCT), part of NHS North of Tyne. Community and acute services are provided by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and for adult mental health by Northumberland Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust.

Safeguarding services

Overall effectiveness

Grade 2 (Good)

13. The overall effectiveness of the safeguarding services provided by the council and its partners is good. An effective response can be demonstrated by the council to the areas for development identified by the unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment arrangements in September 2010. Referrals are now dealt with promptly by the First Call service, which predominantly uses electronic case files. Reflective and challenging supervision was in evidence in supervision files reviewed by inspectors.
14. The council and its partners operate at least in line with statutory minimum guidance set down by *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010*. An exceptionally wide variety of early intervention and preventative services are in place to meet the identified needs of a broad range of service users. However, use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is inconsistent and, although examples were seen of its successful deployment, effective use of the CAF is not in evidence across the full range of need presented by children and young people and their families. Risk and protective factors are effectively addressed as part of initial assessment by the First Call service, although this is not always the case for core assessments and some seen did not make appropriate use of historical information. Good multi-agency ownership of and involvement in child protection plans means that children are safeguarded well. However, written child protection plans do not always provide a clear focus and identified goals, and deficiencies in the plans are not compensated for by subsequent core group meetings and child protection reviews.
15. Good leadership and management are demonstrated by the council's senior management team and their partners, although the police have experienced recent difficulties in resourcing attendance at key meetings. Very effective support to services can be demonstrated by the council's Commissioning and Resources service, which administers a number of very high quality strategies and frameworks. These include the workforce strategy and workforce development activity, service commissioning and the outstanding use of performance data, which is a significant strength of the organisation. Active engagement of children and young people by a well resourced participation service is also a significant strength. However, the recording of the views of children and young people and their parents as part of assessment and planning processes is inconsistent. An effective quality assurance framework is in place, which is supported by the use of a range of audits, and these are appropriately collated and presented to the Quality Assurance (QA) panel. However, auditing is not sufficiently independent from service delivery and is insufficiently rigorous and robust, with insufficient evidence seen by inspectors of practice developments

that have been identified and then successfully driven through following auditing activity.

16. The Local Safeguarding Children Board is effectively led by an Independent Chair who has introduced a suitable structure for delivery of its core business, underpinned by an increasingly robust business plan. A strong commitment to multi-agency partnership working is demonstrated by the Board. For example, through its safer parenting group in partnership with the Adult Safeguarding Board, the training strategy group and three serious case reviews (SCRs) undertaken recently. However, the monitoring and evaluation of actions for the Council resulting from reviews is undertaken within the same structure as the council's own audits and therefore similarly lacks independence and is insufficiently rigorous and robust.

Capacity for improvement

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

17. The council and its partners have an outstanding capacity to improve. Through excellent data management, senior managers and their partners are able to demonstrate a consistent track record of comparably strong and improving performance across all areas of service delivery. Highly efficient management of resources is a key strength of the organisation and this has resulted in there being no cuts in front line services and some investment in priorities, such as early intervention and prevention services, despite reductions in the council's overall budget.
18. A highly effective multi-agency CYPL Board predates children's trust arrangements and has been retained. The CYPL Board provides very effective governance to a range of initiatives and services which are administered by subsidiary local and thematic groups of senior professionals, such as the highly effective area strategy groups. Significant and sustained improvements in outcomes for young people are evidenced through this very successful structure, such as reductions in anti-social behaviour and youth crime, and increases in the numbers of young people in education, employment and training, notwithstanding pressures on the local economy.
19. A comprehensive and detailed Children and Young People's (CYP) Plan demonstrates the council and its partners' strong vision for, and commitment to services to children. The plan was developed following a wide ranging consultation exercise, including the extensive involvement of children and young people, and effectively underpins the continuous development and improvement of services. Participation is an embedded part of the council and its partners' practice, and this is demonstrated by the exceptionally well administered activities of the Young Mayor, Cabinet and Council, which operate in parallel to formal arrangements for political representation and add significant value to the engagement process.

20. Full engagement of the council's elected members and senior officers is achieved well, through clear lines of communication with children's services senior managers. The Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board is also able to escalate safeguarding concerns where appropriate. Elected members share a cross party political commitment to the delivery of high quality services. For example, the innovative project work undertaken by the council's scrutiny committee, which has resulted in demonstrable, sustainable improvements in services to children and young people.

Areas for improvement

21. In order to improve the quality of provision and services for safeguarding children and young people in North Tyneside, the council and its partners should take the following action.

Immediately:

- improve the effectiveness of arrangements with the police for the risk management of information where there may be concerns about children, including sharing domestic violence notifications with health staff
- ensure effective contribution by the police to strategy meetings.

Within three months:

- ensure the views of children and young people are consistently gathered and recorded in all assessments and plans
- improve the response to learning from SCRs, audits and the quality assurance panel to ensure that action plans resulting from quality assurance activities are properly evaluated and lead to demonstrable improvement to services
- Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to complete a training needs analysis to identify those staff that require safeguarding children training. This analysis should lead to action to ensure that all staff are appropriately trained.
- Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust Safeguarding Committee should ensure that it fulfils its responsibilities to co-ordinate activity on safeguarding children practice across the organisation.
- ensure that child protection and children in need plans are SMART and focused consistently and appropriately on the identified needs of, and risks to children and young people.

Within six months:

- ensure that thresholds for the use of CAF are appropriately understood across all agencies and that where they are undertaken, their focus is clear

Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people

Children and young people are safe and feel safe

Grade 2 (Good)

22. The effectiveness of services to ensure that children and young people are safe and feel safe is good. Clear, multi-agency strategies for responding to allegations against persons in a position of trust are implemented appropriately by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). A rigorous case tracking system means that settings which are the focus of a high number of LADO referrals are appropriately identified and issues addressed. LADO training has been successfully integrated into a number of the Local Safeguarding Children Board's safeguarding courses and results in increased awareness amongst professionals of the LADO's role in keeping children safe.
23. Thorough investigation of more general complaints means that appropriate responses are given and the necessary actions undertaken, to improve safeguarding procedures and practice. Effective monitoring by the council of the number and pattern of complaints does not indicate any significant weaknesses or deficits in safeguarding practice.
24. Effective processes and tracking systems are in place to ensure that the council's recruitment practice is fully compliant with statutory requirements. Human Resources files are kept well and have benefitted positively from a recent change to electronic record keeping. Current Criminal Records Bureau checks were seen by inspectors on all files reviewed and a robust risk assessment process is in place and signed off by senior managers, to ensure that children are appropriately safeguarded.
25. Immediate action is taken by the First Call team to safeguard young people at risk, and effective procedures and processes are in place where this is due to a specialised need, for example in relation to forced marriages. Priority is appropriately given by the council to safeguarding children and young people who are placed in settings which are judged good or outstanding for safeguarding in their regulatory inspection reports.
26. Good focus by the council and its partners through the area children's strategy groups has resulted in improving educational outcomes for vulnerable children. Outcomes at the Early Years Foundation Stage are improving, including children from low income families and are comparable to similar areas. GCSE results have improved significantly in 2011, including for those children and young people in receipt of free school meals. There is an increasing proportion of young people from low

income families achieving a level 2 qualification, although this is not mirrored for those achieving level 3. A very good proportion of young offenders are engaged in education, employment or training (EET) and the proportion of all young people who are not in education, training or employment (NEET) is low compared to statistical and national comparators.

27. A variety of services provide secure opportunities for children and young people to enjoy safe leisure activities and these are well targeted at specific groups such as disabled children or young carers. Young people who spoke to inspectors report that they generally feel safe and that bullying has declined. Inspectors saw examples where the diverse needs of young people such as those from the Roma community are addressed well, through the use of skilled interpreters. However, assessments and plans are inconsistent in including young people's views.

Quality of provision

Grade 3 (Adequate)

28. The quality of safeguarding provision is adequate. A very good range of early intervention and support services is available from the council and its partners and access to these services is speedy. Good support, once need is identified, is available to victims of domestic abuse including independent domestic violence advocates (IDVAs) who ensure they contact victims at the earliest stage and proactively seek to support them. Valued and accessible therapeutic services for children who have witnessed domestic abuse are available from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
29. The quality of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is too variable with some seen by inspectors that include detailed assessments while others lack clarity and focus on outcomes. Health visitors make very good use of the framework for children under two years old. However, agencies' understanding of thresholds for use of CAF are not clear and some agencies, such as schools, make little use of the framework and too few CAFs are therefore completed on older young people. Too many CAFs are used to access services rather than to directly assess and meet children's needs through a team around the child (TAC). In some cases seen, a swifter response to the First Call service was required in order to address young people's emerging needs. While there is positive anecdotal evidence of effectiveness, the council and its partners undertake no routine evaluation of the CAF that identifies its strengths and areas for improvement. However, when the CAF is implemented appropriately, parents report to inspectors very positive outcomes, such as better understanding of their children's behaviour, more effective parenting strategies and improved engagement with school.
30. A very effective response to contacts and referrals at higher levels of need is made by the First Call service, which provides a swift and appropriate

action where children may be at risk of immediate harm. The service benefits from robust management, supported by regular and comprehensive senior management oversight. However, the service processes a large number of notifications regarding domestic abuse received from the police, but there are often no issues of concern regarding children. The creation of a system for screening notifications to reduce the number unnecessarily referred has not been sufficiently swift, although there are now firm plans in place to resolve this problem.

31. Cases are promptly allocated to qualified social workers and, where families have continuing needs for support and protection, effective transfer arrangements are in place to the safeguarding teams. Strategy discussions and meetings are usually timely but attendance by the police at these meetings and at initial child protection conferences has recently become inconsistent, which impedes their effectiveness.
32. Detailed initial assessments are well focussed on risk issues and core assessments refer appropriately to risk and protective factors but there is too much variability, for instance in the use of historical information. Completion of initial and core assessments has been very timely, although more recently there has been a dip in performance when demand has risen sharply. Well completed chronologies were seen by inspectors, which successfully highlighted key events in the child's life, although in some cases the chronologies lacked detail. The response of parents to assessments and proposed plans is inconsistently recorded. Children are usually seen alone but their views are also inconsistently included and families' ownership of, and commitment to plans is therefore unclear.
33. Very good performance management ensures that child protection conferences and reviews are timely and attendance is customarily good. Independent Reviewing Officer's (IRO's) practice in seeing parents before the conference to discuss the issues is valued by them. Child protection or child in need plans are appropriately put in place where required. However, too many plans are formulaic, lack clear focus on risk factors, include actions unrelated to identified risks, and do not include sufficient detail to make clear what changes are required or how progress will be measured.
34. Regular core groups meetings are well attended by key professionals. However, core groups rarely compensate for the weaknesses arising from conferences, often lack timescales for achieving change or actions, and are not always sufficiently focused on the progress of the child protection plan. Very timely reviews are undertaken of child protection plans but they are ineffective in remedying earlier deficits.
35. Case records are largely up to date with management decisions recorded well. However, the rationale for visits to families, how this reflects the plan

and the social workers' evaluation of their observations and discussions is not always sufficiently clear.

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

36. The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe is good. Effective governance arrangements across the health partnership provide Trust Boards with assurance on safeguarding practice. However, the safeguarding committee for the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust does not sufficiently fulfil its role in co-ordinating and driving forward good safeguarding children practice. Consistency in the approach taken across primary care to training in safeguarding is ensured by the North of Tyne Safeguarding Plan. Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust is in the early stages of planning a full training need analysis to ensure that the numbers of staff appropriately trained in safeguarding continues to improve. High numbers of General Practitioners (GPs) have received appropriate training and this has resulted in improved contributions to child protection meetings through conference reports. Implementation and routine monitoring of supervision on safeguarding children practice is variable across the partnership, but excellent within community services.
37. North Tyneside, Northumberland and Newcastle councils share an effective and appropriately constituted Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP). A Child Death sub-group has recently been formed to ensure the implementation and monitoring of the recommendations from local case discussions.
38. Good arrangements are in place to carry out child protection medicals and medicals following alleged sexual abuse. A clear commitment from senior medical staff within the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust enables a timely response to requests for child protection medicals and there are good arrangements for peer review to ensure that they are of a consistently good standard. All cases of suspected acute sexual abuse are referred to a well regarded specialist unit in Newcastle.
39. Children and young people attending A&E at Tyneside General Hospital are safeguarded well. A flagging system is in place to highlight children who have a child protection plan in place or other additional services such as CAMHS. A comprehensive assessment is carried out on all children that meets fully with National Institute for Clinical Excellence guidance and ensures that children are kept safe by assessing them for non accidental injury and communicating effectively with other professionals involved in their care.
40. Effective use is made of health visitors' and school nurses' skills to deliver the full healthy child programme and work as part of TACs and child

protection core groups, with close links to children's centres and family support workers. Excellent family working helps to identify additional support needs early and gives the family continuity of practitioner involvement and consistency in any therapeutic approach.

41. Good support, through a range of interventions is offered by the N2L young people drugs and alcohol service to young people who misuse substances. Comprehensive assessment informs holistic care plans and the majority of young people are discharged from the service in an agreed and planned way.
42. Good access to effective integrated sexual health and genito urinary (GUM) services has had a positive impact, such as the excellent progress being made in continuing to reduce the number of teenage conceptions. The provision of sex and relationship education within schools has been positively evaluated by young people. Targeted young people have been engaged by school nurses in group work to look at raising self esteem and reducing risk taking behaviours; these have proved popular, with some young people moving on to becoming peer educators and mentors.
43. Effective arrangements are in place to assess vulnerability in pregnancy through comprehensive discussion at pre-booking, booking and scheduled antenatal appointments. In response to learning from a serious case review, all pregnant women are now seen alone at some time during the initial booking and this allows for discussion around potential domestic violence or any other confidential issue that they may wish to raise. A well co-ordinated and effective multi-agency approach supports teenagers who are pregnant. A good range of perinatal mental health services are available for women who require additional support for their emotional health and well-being, including a locally based Babyology service. Good liaison between services ensures a co-ordinated approach to the care of women who misuse substances or alcohol during pregnancy.
44. Good partnership working ensures that the unborn child is safeguarded well. Timely pre-birth conferences are planned and a shared responsibility for creating the North of Tyne Birth Plan continues to ensure that all professionals involved with the new family are aware of what actions need to be taken. The plan is shared with parents who benefit from this co-ordinated approach to safeguarding the newborn infant.
45. Good access is offered for children, young people and families to emotional health and well-being services. Good support is offered by Primary Mental Health Workers to professionals across the partnership, and well integrated care pathways mean that the emotional health needs of children are identified and responded to by the most appropriate service. Good access is also provided to core CAMHS; appointments are offered on clinical priority and the multi-disciplinary team are able to offer a wide range of interventions. A newly developed Intensive Community

Treatment Service has been commissioned to work closely with those young people with acute and specialist mental health need. This work is successfully enabling those young people to remain in their home rather than be admitted into hospital. Good support is available for those children and young people who self harm, with clear pathways of care in place to support accident and emergency and urgent care services.

46. Good support is available to children with complex health needs and learning disability and waiting times to therapy services are generally satisfactory. Highly regarded work with families is provided by specialist health visitors and community children's nurses. Dedicated school nurses support children and young people well in the special schools and enable them to access the curriculum by training education and support staff and in delivering clinical care. Transition arrangements to adult services are variable. Health action plans and hospital passports for young people with complex health needs are part of a project to improve communication and identification of need as young people move into adult services. Young people who need adult mental health services are referred when they are aged around 17½ to allow time for a planned transfer. However, recent national changes to some adult mental health services mean that access is primarily via the GP, although, self-referral is accepted, together with referrals from other health professionals.
47. Good awareness is demonstrated by practitioners working in adult mental health services of the potential impact of parental mental health on children in the family. Good risk assessment processes ensure that the details of all children in the family are accurately recorded. Good awareness of the needs of children who are carers was evident and there are good links with the local carers association to support these vulnerable children.
48. Well established links with social work teams mean that practitioners work together effectively to safeguard children and young people. Joint visits between health and social care staff routinely take place and ensure a co-ordinated approach to working with vulnerable families. Good opportunities exist to discuss operational concerns across health and children's services through established, regular meetings with named nurses and colleagues in the local authority. A well embedded and effective escalation policy exists to resolve areas of professional disagreement.
49. Good awareness is demonstrated across health partners of the impact of domestic violence (DV) on families, and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) are well supported. Routine referral to social care takes place by A&E staff where there is evidence of domestic violence. GPs are becoming increasingly engaged in MARAC and many practices have asked for additional training. However, the police do not share notifications of DV incidents with health visitors and school nurses and this

means that practitioners working closely with families may not be aware of all relevant information.

Ambition and prioritisation

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

50. The ambition for, and prioritisation of, safeguarding services to children and young people are outstanding. An effective scrutiny committee operates in an innovative and non-party politicised way to an agreed work plan. Detailed, comparative information is prepared by Research and Intelligence Officers on which elected members base their activities and they then form effective project groups to divide up the tasks and scrutinise the topics. Comprehensive reports include detailed recommendations to the portfolio holder on improvements to services. Performance is then monitored, from which the committee can demonstrate their contribution to significantly improved performance in areas such as services to young carers and targeted youth provision.
51. Strong strategic influence is exercised by the Director of Children's Services (DCS) through leadership of the CYPL Board and membership of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Appropriate outcomes are set through the Local Safeguarding Children Board Business Plan and a Children and Young People's Plan in which safeguarding is appropriately prioritised. A highly effective model of subsidiarity is championed by the DCS and ensures that decision making is delegated to subsidiary bodies such as the area strategy groups of local professionals, which agree what would work best to deliver the planned outcomes for children and young people in their geographical or service area. For example, Sub 21 targeted youth services provides a range of leisure activities in Wallsend which has significantly reduced anti-social behaviour and Whitley Bay has increased resources available to its local Bangladeshi community.
52. Demonstrable, continuous improvement can be clearly demonstrated by senior managers in children's services who know their service very well and are able to evidence very clear vision and ambition for children. Senior managers are seen as widely accessible, and are credited by staff and partners spoken to by inspectors as effectively promoting and modelling changes in culture across the children and young people's partnership. This enables multi-agency partnership working to become valued, embedded and well targeted on improving outcomes for children and young people.
53. Clear and robust financial management is a significant strength of the council through its Change, Efficiency and Improvement programme. An efficiently managed children's services department has taken a smaller proportion of budget reductions than other areas of the council, increased its income, secured additional funding through grants and the formation of the North Tyneside Learning Trust, and reduced its expenditure. Successful implementation of the programme is leading to a situation in

which there are no cuts in front line children's services and some areas of investment, such as in early intervention and preventative services.

54. A comprehensive CYP plan has been developed by the CYP and Learning Partnership Board following a wide ranging consultation exercise that included extensively gathering the views of children and young people. Clearly established priority areas for development include safeguarding children as priority area one and a detailed and SMART implementation plan is suitably clear on objectives, delivery mechanisms, targets and performance measurements. The positive impact of improvements in services to the lives of children and young people is therefore effectively scoped then implemented by the plan.
55. Clear lines of communication are in place for the Chief Executive to be briefed on developments in children's services and there is the contingency to inform him immediately of critical incidents. The knowledgeable and well informed lead member and Elected Mayor are also well linked to children's services through a cycle of regular meetings and provision is in place for them to be briefed additionally regarding critical incidents. The lead member and the Elected Mayor have regular contact with young people through arrangements for the Young Mayor, Cabinet and Council. A protocol is appropriately in place for the Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board to escalate concerns regarding the performance of children's service to the Chief Executive and senior elected members although this has not yet needed to be tested.

Leadership and management

Grade 2 (Good)

56. Leadership and management of safeguarding services to children are good and have several outstanding features. A comprehensive workforce strategy outlines the CYPL Board's vision, principles and approach to recruiting, training and retaining a suitable children's workforce. Clearly stated plans for improvement include the recruitment of a workforce that reflects the ethnicity of the population; as 2% of the workforce is non-White British compared with 7% of the population as a whole. The strategy is underpinned by an appropriately detailed and SMART action plan, and its successful implementation within children's services has resulted for example in full recruitment of a stable workforce within the social work teams.
57. A high proportion of recently recruited social workers are newly qualified and to secure their retention, the council has put in place an effective package of measures. This includes a high quality working environment, protected caseloads and the incentive of a place on the post qualifying programme for those who successfully complete the consolidation phase. Newly qualified social workers spoken to by inspectors said that they felt

well supported by approachable managers through effective formal and informal support.

58. Highly successful implementation of the training element of the strategy demonstrates workforce development activity of a high quality. For example, the training programme for the Local Safeguarding Children Board, which is effectively overseen by the training strategy group and delivered by an extensive group of training associates. Effective analysis of the skill mix offered by these associates against identified training needs enables the group to develop a comprehensive training programme without unnecessarily expending scarce resources on commissioning external training consultants. The programme is well attended and evaluation methods, which include a pledge to follow up the training six weeks later to determine its effectiveness, demonstrate that satisfaction rates are high. Social workers spoken to during the inspection and those responding to the IPSOS/MORI survey, say that they value the training they receive and are enabled to safeguard children more effectively.
59. Effective learning from three serious case reviews undertaken recently has been usefully aggregated to identify key themes in addition to issues for individual agencies with health services benefitting particularly from concise, dedicated summaries targeted at specific groups of staff. However, while identified actions from the reviews have been almost entirely implemented, the council and its partners have not yet evaluated the impact on practice of actions resulting from plans and cannot therefore be assured of practice improvements.
60. An established and effective culture of listening to and responding well to user views means that young people are actively engaged both locally and nationally. The views of children and young people are sought widely through a good range of forums and groups including a health and well-being group, area youth councils, and young disabled persons' network. Consultation exercises ensure children and young people from a range of backgrounds including both children and young people with a disability and young carers can influence service development. The participation of children and young people is supported very well by the Participation Team. Children and young people's influence on service development is widespread and young people spoken to by inspectors felt that their views were listened to and respected.
61. Effective action is taken by senior managers of the council and its partners to ensure that front line child protection services are suitably resourced and have increased capacity to meet increasing demands on services. They are actively involved in building the capacity of the voluntary sector to provide services locally through activities such as signposting them to procurement opportunities and encouraging consortiums. Despite budget pressures, new and valuable initiatives such as in Family Group

Conferences and a new Women's Refuge have increased the capacity of the council and its partners to meet need.

62. Rigorous business cases which reflect local priorities, performance information and the views of children and families, govern service commissioning, for instance the very successful development of disability services. Business cases routinely use comparative data on existing performance to identify gaps in provision and to provide clear evidence of the advantages of tendering, outsourcing, or re-aligning the service, resulting in a good variety of commissioned relationships. A robust procurement process is effectively administered where necessary by the commissioning team, in which tenders are invited and thoroughly evaluated before contracts are awarded. Rigorous arrangements are in place to monitor the performance of all commissioned services through a variety of methods including service user and professional's feedback and observation. This ensures that resources are used effectively and provide the best possible value for children, young people and their families.

Performance management and quality assurance

Grade 2 (Good)

63. Performance management and quality assurance arrangements for safeguarding children are good. Highly sophisticated data management is a significant strength of the organisation and particularly effectively supports the monitoring of priorities set by the CYPL Board through the CYP Plan. Detailed comparative and analytical reports such as the Data Annexe are provided promptly by dedicated Research and Intelligence Officers, (R&I) who are linked well to a variety of benchmarking forums. The council and its partners are therefore able through self evaluation to demonstrate strong and improving performance across all areas of the service and effectively monitor action taken to reduce any identified deficits.
64. A strong culture is in evidence of management ownership of the performance and quality of the service for which they are responsible. Managers produce their own data and analytical reports and R&I officers tailor the performance information and the support they supply to complement the manager's requirements in this area. An exceptionally wide range of examples were seen by inspectors of the effective use of data management within services, such as children's centres and young carers.
65. A comprehensive quality assurance framework ensures that there is a range of audits in place; some of which are routine, such as the audit of cases by team managers each month, and others are independent and used regularly, such as the reciprocal arrangement with South Tyneside. However, few of the audits seen demonstrated a focus on quality rather than compliance with process. The lessons learnt from audits are suitably

drawn together into overview reports that are presented at the QA panel. However, responsibility for auditing, and for administering the panel rests with managers who are also responsible for service delivery. This has resulted in monitoring of action plans that is insufficiently rigorous and robust and little evidence was seen by inspectors of an evaluative approach to auditing which could evidence demonstrable improvements in services to children.

66. Regular and robust staff supervision is provided, and review of social worker's supervision files by inspectors evidences good quality, reflective sessions. Supervision takes account of staff training needs and reflects appropriately on the impact of training on their practice. Individual performance is formally appraised at least annually, and appraisals seen by inspectors suitably identify areas for development, for example skills as a reflective practitioner, or improvement in analysis and the quality of reports. A culture of high personal performance is in place and action plans are put in place with clearly identified targets for improvement where deficits are identified through supervision and appraisal processes. Where plans are not effective and targets unmet, appropriate measures are deployed through capability or disciplinary procedures.

Partnership working

Grade 2 (Good)

67. Partnership working arrangements are good. Appropriate arrangements are in place for leadership of the Local Safeguarding Children Board by an Independent Chair who demonstrates a clear vision for safeguarding services and who is held accountable through a formal contract and written governance arrangements. A remodelled Board structure has improved its effectiveness by reducing the number of standing sub-committees and reduced the number of routine meetings by increasing the amount of work undertaken by task and finish groups. An effective business plan has an appropriate structure and identifies aims, outcome measurements and timescales and is increasingly focusing on outcomes.
68. A strong partnership ethos pervades the delivery of services emanating from senior managers of children's services and their counterparts in partner agencies. Effective collaborative working with the Adult Safeguarding Board through a joint safer parenting group reinforces the way that children's services work with adults via the Think Family approach. The Local Safeguarding Children Board is well supported which allows it to fulfil its statutory functions well and this commitment is reflected in well attended strategy meetings, child protection conferences and reviews, and core groups. A high level of multi-agency ownership in the delivery of child protection plans was evidenced during consideration of case files by inspectors.
69. Under representation by agencies other than social care and health on the Safeguarding Management Group, which forms the executive wing of the

Local Safeguarding Children Board, limits the effectiveness of its monitoring function and the emphasis of monitoring activity is on process not quality. Audits are used appropriately to scrutinise performance however, monitoring of the action plans resulting from audits and serious case reviews, lacks rigour. As a result, monitoring activity is not independently and effectively driving the Board business plan.

70. A range of effective partnerships with third sector organisations means that they offer significant added value to services to children and young people. Organisations spoken to during the inspection said that they feel a valued member of an inclusive partnership. Particularly effective partnership working was demonstrated by the Tyne Gateway social entrepreneurship project. This has been independently evaluated and is now established as an independent trust providing highly valued services to families while building the capacity of the entrepreneurs.
71. Effective governance is provided by the CYPL Board to a range of partnership initiatives, for example the current remodelling of early intervention and preventative services. The Board has previously been instrumental in the creation of effective Area Children's Teams formed in response to concerns identified by referrers such as schools, of gaps in services. Successful remodelling on the area strategy group footprint of targeted services, such as educational welfare provided swift and effective access to those services as an alternative to formal social work intervention.
72. A well attended Domestic Abuse Forum meets regularly and has good links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and to processes such as MARAC. It has enhanced understanding of domestic abuse, for instance with training of magistrates to support the well established specialist courts. It also effectively provides governance to ensure that residents of the new Women's Refuge accesses a wide range of services, such as local schools and health services.
73. Effective arrangements for Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements and MARAC are in place and, in MAPPA examples were seen of effective management of risk with a good balance achieved of focus on the young person as an offender, but also as an individual in need of services. Highly speedy examples of positive intervention were seen, for instance the provision of forensic psychiatric assessments. Attendance at both processes by partner agencies is good and according to members spoken to, communication and trust are key features of partner relationships.

Services for looked after children

Overall effectiveness

Grade 2 (Good)

74. The overall effectiveness of services for looked after children is good. Significant continuous improvement in performance can be demonstrated by the council since the creation of a dedicated social work service to looked after children and young people and its co-location with Raising the Health and Education of Looked After Children (RHELAC) and fostering and adoption teams. Highly effective implementation of a comprehensive sufficiency strategy means that the large majority of looked after children and young people are placed in the council's in house provision, all of which is rated through regulatory inspection as good or above. A high level of assessment, training and support is offered to the carers of children and young people placed with friends and family, which are high in number compared with statistical neighbours and the national average, and Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) are used appropriately. Only settings judged good or above are used where placement outside of the borough is considered necessary.
75. Effective implementation of the workforce strategy results in all looked after children and young people being allocated to a qualified social worker. Specialised training needs are suitably identified through regular personal development review, such as skills in delivering life story book work, although not all children eligible for life story books yet have one. Manageable caseloads mean that social workers are able to be significant figures in the lives of looked after children and young people and foster carers reported good quality relationships between themselves, children and young people placed with them and allocated social workers. Not all parents of looked after children are kept informed of their children's progress after they become looked after. Care plans seen by inspectors were generally of good quality and parenting assessments by the council's own in house team were a significant strength. However, both written Personal Education Plans (PEPs) and Pathway Plans are of variable quality and do not always drive the very high level of inter-agency working and excellent outcomes that exist for looked after children and care leavers.
76. Highly effective partnership working is a significant strength of services, most particularly the very good level of engagement with the council's Legal Services team and with looked after children and young people themselves. Not all children who responded to the Care4me survey were aware of the availability of advocates. Timely reviews of looked after children are undertaken by IROs. However, there is not sufficient evidence of challenge from the IRO service which is under resourced, and is yet to meet the requirements of statutory care planning guidance introduced in April 2011. Services to looked after children and young people are audited appropriately and results are collated and presented to the QA panel.

However, these arrangements are not sufficiently independent of service delivery and are therefore insufficiently rigorous and robust in driving through service improvement.

Capacity for improvement

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

77. The capacity for improvement is outstanding. Very high levels of commitment and clear vision and ambition by the council and its partners are delivering excellent outcomes for looked after children and young people. Very strong data management demonstrates that the council is performing well above comparable statistical neighbour and national averages in most areas and trends are improving in all respects. Highly efficient use of resources means that the service has not experienced cuts and has been able to retain funding, such as Personal Education Allowances, which add considerable value to service provision. Highly effective management of budgets such as that for placing children out of borough is also in evidence. Numbers of children placed out of the borough have reduced from 75 to 30 over the past two years. Further efficiencies have been achieved by entering into consortium arrangements with neighbouring authorities for the procurement of placements from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). Resulting savings have been reinvested in services such as the Crisis Intervention Team to divert children from the edges of care.
78. Highly effective prioritisation of services to looked after children and young people is demonstrated by senior managers of the council. This includes for example, the headteacher of the virtual school (VHT) and by elected members through the successful Corporate Parenting Committee under the effective leadership of the lead member. Exceptionally high levels of partnership working with looked after children and young people on service development is strongly in evidence, administered very well by the council's participation officers through the children in care council. Innovative project work by the Scrutiny Committee has resulted in demonstrable sustained improvements in the physical care standards offered to looked after children and young people in the council's children's homes.

Areas for improvement

79. In order to improve the quality of provision and services for looked after children and young people in North Tyneside, the council and its partners should take the following action.

Immediately:

- ensure that increased resources within the IRO service result in the service being in line with statutory guidance on care planning

- Commissioners and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to develop a clear priority pathway for looked after children and young people to access emotional health and well-being services without delay

Within three months:

- improve the quality of written pathway plans and ensure that they drive the delivery of effective multi-agency services to care leavers
- produce a SMART action plan for the implementation of the health passport for young people leaving care
- review the delivery of life story book work for those children and young people looked after long term
- ensure awareness amongst looked after children and young people of their entitlement to an advocacy service
- ensure that challenging and reflective supervision is available consistently across children's services
- review the resourcing and line management arrangements for the designated nurse to ensure that these meet national guidance and are sufficient to meet the needs of the developing looked after children's health service.

Within six months:

- introduce electronic record keeping for the fostering and adoption team
- improve partnership working with parents of looked after children and young people to ensure that they are kept informed of key events in their children's lives.

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

Being healthy

Grade 2 (Good)

80. The health of looked after children is good. Effective information sharing and co-ordinated packages of care to looked after children are delivered by the multi-agency RHELAC team. This team of health and education professionals are co-located with the social work teams and work together effectively to improve health and education outcomes for looked after children and young people. However, resourcing of the designated nurse role for looked after children does not reflect the increased numbers of children entering the care system and does not meet their needs.
81. Excellent health outcomes for looked after children and young people are above that of national and statistical neighbours. High quality assessments of a child's health are delivered by a suitably qualified paediatrician and good progress is being made in addressing the delay in some children receiving assessments on admission.
82. A high standard of health reviews is currently in place and the RHELAC team are exploring alternative ways of carrying out health reviews for looked after children who are under 11 years old to further improve practice. It is too early to comment on the impact of this initiative although early indications are positive. Young people are routinely asked where they would like their annual health review to take place. This helps to ensure that young people are engaged in the process and contribute well to their own care plan.
83. Good arrangements are in place to quality assure all initial health assessments, health reviews and health plans, including those for children who are placed out of area. Monthly supervision meetings of the looked after children health team appropriately discuss all newly looked after children, and any new initial health assessments or health reviews are scrutinised alongside any changes to placements. A recent project undertaken by the community paediatricians demonstrated that young people were entering the care system with unmet health need and that young people's health improved while looked after.
84. An innovative, reciprocal arrangement for CAMHS North of Tyne helps to ensure that children placed out of North Tyneside but within Newcastle or Northumberland are not disadvantaged in accessing emotional health support. The Clinical Psychologist for looked after children is suitably involved in assessing the appropriateness of some commissioned residential placements where therapeutic CAMHS intervention is required.

85. Good use is made of the completed Strength and Difficulties questionnaire in assessing the emotional health of all children becoming looked after to demonstrate that their emotional health continues to improve year on year. Completed forms are scored and discussed at the monthly supervision meeting of the looked after children health team to explore whether further consultation is required with professionals working with the young person or if further CAMHS intervention is needed to address their emotional well-being.
86. Good support to social workers and other professionals is offered by the Clinical Psychologist through consultation and a regular programme of training. This consultation service helps to support young people in their placement. Looked after children and young people who would benefit from CAMHS are promptly referred to the core CAMH services. However, there is no care pathway in place to explicitly ensure that this especially vulnerable group of young people are given priority. However, no young person is currently waiting to receive a service.
87. Good access is provided for looked after young people to effective, universal Child and Adolescent Sexual Health (CASH) and substance misuse services. Enhanced support for those young people that find it hard to engage with services is provided through the outreach CASH worker and the substance misuse link worker from N2L the drugs and alcohol service, who often works individually with young people to minimise the impact of risk taking behaviour. Effective use is made of the local drug use screening tool (DUST) which has been adapted to reflect the looked after population as part of the health review for older looked after children.
88. Good support is offered by health services to foster carers and residential home care staff, with a variety of training available, including Level 1 alcohol and drug training, healthy lives and how to speak to young people about sex and relationships. Targeted health promotion for looked after children is predominantly delivered through the training of foster carers and residential home staff, as well as opportunities taken during health reviews. Innovative, targeted dental health promotion and a dedicated weekly dental clinic has helped to maintain well the oral health of looked after children and young people. The dental clinic offer acclimatisation appointments to build up the confidence of those children who may have a phobia. The service is highly regarded by foster carers and residential care staff.
89. The public health nurses contribute well to looked after children reviews and the designated nurse has active involvement in the pathway planning process. However, current arrangements for providing young people with a health summary on leaving care are weak and consist of a copy of the latest health plan. Plans are firmly in place to develop a health passport for young people leaving care to ensure that a young person is confident

and competent in taking responsibility for, and maintaining their health. The passport will contain a detailed health summary and competencies include how to make an appointment with a GP and how to find local health services. This work is in the early stages of development and it is therefore not yet possible to demonstrate any impact.

Staying safe**Grade 1 (Outstanding)**

90. Arrangements to safeguard looked after children and young people are outstanding. All looked after children and young people spoken to by inspectors and nearly all who responded to the Care4Me survey said they felt safe in their placements and that their placements were good.
91. Robust gate keeping by the multi-agency Internal Resources and Higher Level panels, results in children and young people becoming looked after only when necessary. Panels have a suitable level of seniority. This leads to both prompt decision making regarding the appropriateness of children and young people becoming looked after, and to additional resources being quickly identified to enable children and young people to remain at home.
92. Effective parenting programmes from the Family Intervention Project successfully engage parents in groups and individual sessions to improve parenting standards and reduce the need for children and young people on the edges of care to become looked after. Regular, well targeted and highly effective monitoring by the multi-disciplinary Risk Panel ensures suitable service provision to children and young people whose behaviour is high risk to themselves or to others. Good access to a range of specialist support services helps prevent placement breakdown and this was strongly confirmed by parents of looked after children and young people seen during the inspection.
93. A well used out of hours duty service provided by the fostering team is ensuring that foster carers receive a high level of immediate, informed support and contributing to increased placement stability. Significant improvement has been achieved in the short term stability of placements over the past four years, with performance better than similar authorities or nationally in 2010/2011 at 9.9% and the council's own monitoring showing continued significant improvement this year. The percentage of children in placement for over two years remains close to that of similar authorities or nationally at 66.2%.
94. High quality screening and assessment of connected carers means that they receive a good level of support, with full access to all services provided to adoptive families. There has been an increased number of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) with 14 made during 2010/11 and eight made so far this year. Although there has been no formal analysis of the outcome of these placements, only one placement is reported to have been disrupted from those made since SGOs were introduced.

95. Excellent access to social workers and to other professional staff such as education welfare officers, teaching staff and members of the RHELAC team, leads to any safeguarding concerns being addressed at an early stage according to looked after children and young people spoken to by inspectors. The equality and diversity needs of looked after children are met well and creatively by foster carers, residential staff and by social workers.
96. Robust arrangements are in place for monitoring the quality and appropriateness of placements of looked after children and young people out of authority. Information and intelligence held about placements has improved since April 2011 when a consortium approach was taken to procuring placements from a group of IFAs, and this has led to better placement matching. Contractual arrangements are closely monitored. There is excellent continuity of support for children and young people placed out of authority who were previously looked after in local residential provision. Residential staff are encouraged to retain contact with the young person and to offer support to the provider where necessary.
97. Accessibility to children and young people has improved as a result of looked after children and young people being provided with mobile phones, which enables them to keep in good contact with their carers and social workers and stay safe. Social workers report that they are able to regularly text and phone children and young people to provide support and encouragement, for instance prior to having an exam or interview. Children and young people reported to be missing frequently, remain in touch with their carers through use of the mobile phones. The missing from care protocol is working well, with daily information sharing and monthly meetings providing close monitoring. Police undertake safe and well interviews and all missing looked after children and young people are offered a prompt return interview with an adult of their choice.
98. Two of six regulated children's homes in North Tyneside are judged outstanding and four are judged good. The fostering service was judged outstanding at its last inspection in 2007; the adoption service was judged good in 2011. Only external placements judged good or better are commissioned by the council. Placements are closely monitored, with a full review being undertaken for all placements subsequently judged satisfactory or inadequate to ensure that the placement continues to meet the needs of the child or young person.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

99. Enjoy and achieve outcomes for looked after children are outstanding. Children and young people enjoy their education and achieve well. The VHT, RHELAC team and the council and their partners are all highly ambitious for looked after children. Extremely effective leadership is

provided by the VHT with support from the school improvement service. Well considered strategies to improve educational outcomes for looked after children ensure that children and young people make good progress from their starting points.

100. Highly successful support for looked after children is offered through the RHELAC team. Specialist support for English and mathematics is in place and one to one support is particularly effective in raising attainment. Those educated outside of the area receive the same level of support as children and young people educated locally. Looked after children and young people receive good support, tailored well to their individual needs at schools visited by inspectors during this inspection. Effective training is valued highly by designated teachers and furthers their understanding of the needs of looked after children. Children and young people told inspectors that they valued the support and help they received and enjoyed their education.
101. Excellent understanding of the cohort, analysis of performance and the strengths and weaknesses of provision, enables well conceived and effective strategies to be put in place to secure improvements in outcomes for looked after children. Data is routinely analysed and used well to monitor the progress of most looked after children, target children for additional support and to challenge schools on attainment where necessary. Data for those with more complex needs is now being gathered and monitoring of this group by the RHELAC team is more recent.
102. Very effective arrangements to support attendance at school and prevent exclusions means that the attendance of looked after children is improving. Persistent absence amongst looked after children is lower than that for all pupils. Authorised and unauthorised absences are lower than looked after children nationally. In line with other pupils, there is a very well established trend of no permanent exclusion of looked after children. Following a two year decline in the use of fixed term exclusions for looked after children regular monitoring showed an increase in 2011. Effective remedial action as a result, means that local data now demonstrates that the number of fixed term exclusions is lower in 2011-12 than at any time in the last three years. Support for attendance is good through both dedicated education welfare officer, 'first day response provision' and the provision of flexible curriculum programmes.
103. Excellent progress is made at Key Stage 2 by looked after children who also attain well in English and Mathematics and many reach the levels expected for their age. At Key Stage 4, where a high proportion have special educational needs, their attainment of five GCSEs including English and mathematics reaches the levels of other looked after children nationally, representing good achievement from their starting points. The proportion gaining 5 GCSEs is better than for looked after children nationally. The council recognises the gap in educational attainment

between looked after children and their peers locally. However, the attainment gap between looked after children and all pupils at Key Stages 2 and 4 is closer than the gap nationally and is closing well, particularly at Key Stage 2.

104. Most children and young people have an up to date PEP which captures their views well. Those spoken to by inspectors valued PEP meetings to review their progress in school. However, the local authority has recognised that the quality of PEPs vary and is taking appropriate action to ensure greater consistency.
105. High priority is appropriately placed on supporting children and young people to participate in wider learning and personal development opportunities. Looked after children have access to a wide range of leisure, recreational and cultural opportunities and those surveyed by the council agree that these activities are very effectively promoted. Personal Education Allowances are used well to support both learning and personal development, so that looked after children and young people can pursue their interests and hobbies. The achievements of looked after children are celebrated well through two annual awards ceremonies.

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

106. Arrangements for looked after children and young people to make a positive contribution are outstanding. Excellent engagement of looked after children and care leavers in service development means that they actively participate in local and national campaigns on issues important to them. Well established, age-appropriate groups where their views are actively sought include the children in care council which is routinely attended by service managers. Children and young people with disabilities using short break services are suitably supported in commenting on the quality of their care through the use of advocates.
107. The views of looked after children impact very well on the development of services. For example, they are fully involved in the recruitment of staff, foster carers and prospective adopters; they undertake regulation 33 visits, have developed an excellent room used for contact and are involved in the regional commissioning arrangement for out of authority residential placement providers. They participate effectively in the corporate parenting panel and are actively involved in the wider area youth forum. Looked after children have contributed effectively to the development of the pledge, which sets out what children and young people can expect from the council.
108. A wide range of personal and social skills is accrued by looked after children through their engagement, including; greater confidence and self-esteem, advocacy and public speaking skills. Excellent support is received

from the participation team and older young people act as good role models for younger participants in engagement activities.

109. Very good availability of advocates for looked after children means that there is no delay following referral. However, the Care4Me survey reported that some looked after children who responded did not know what an advocate was or how to get one. Looked after children who spoke to inspectors felt that their views were listened to and confirmed the wide range of support available to them. Furthermore, they told inspectors that they were aware of how to complain and three quarters who completed the Care4Me survey said that they knew how to make a complaint to the council. The vast majority of complaints are resolved at an early stage. More widely complaints by the children in care council are responded to well by the local authority and where appropriate Independent Visitors are provided once a suitable match has been agreed.
110. A concerted and highly effective multi-agency focus on reducing offending by looked after children has resulted in the proportion reducing significantly year-on-year from 20% in 2008/09 to 11.6% in 2012, underpinned by the very successful use of restorative justice approaches. Offending by young people placed in residential units has significantly reduced by over 25% since 2010. Sensitive and creative management by the Youth Offending Service of transition to the Probation Service for looked after young people subject to orders, ensures offenders continue to engage effectively with services.

Economic well-being

Grade 2 (Good)

111. Economic well-being outcomes are good. A good and improving proportion of looked after children leaving school and care leavers are in education, employment and training (EET). Following the completion of year 11 in 2011, 82% of North Tyneside's looked after children were in full-time education and none were unemployed, well above national and statistical comparators. The percentage of care leavers in EET has increased in the past two years; in 2010/11 it was up to 88% well above the similar areas and the average for care leavers in England. Good individual support, for example through a dedicated Connexions personal adviser, and an increasing range of training options and programmes underpin these positive outcomes. The 'Go For It' programme enables care leavers to find sustainable employment and a small number of apprenticeships and work experience placements are offered within the local authority.
112. Good multi-agency oversight of all those post-16 is provided by the 'Care to Work' forum and close monitoring of older looked after children and care leavers ensures that the support offered meets their individual needs well. Care leavers who spoke to inspectors rate highly the support and help they received by the leaving care team. Those in education and training had developed well their career aspirations and most were clear

on the next steps they needed to take to achieve their goals. There are currently nine care leavers at university. Good financial support and incentives such as the use of bursaries and bonuses help sustain young people in education, training and employment.

113. Insufficiently robust written pathway plans lack detail of the actions required to move young people on to independence and belie the well tailored support that care leavers receive. The outcomes sought from plans are appropriately noted. However, reviews of the plans fail to identify whether they have been achieved or whether further action is necessary. Health needs, including emotional and psychological are not always identified and young people's cultural and linguistic needs are not always consistently recorded.
114. Good support and the good range of housing options available including; training flats, floating support and supported tenancies, means that all care leavers are in suitable accommodation. An increasing number of young people secure council tenancies. Two new 'training' flats are proving successful in supporting young people to gain independence and young people described the good help they receive in developing their independent living skills such as budgeting. A well conceived strategy to expand the number of training flats is in place.

Quality of provision

Grade 2 (Good)

115. The quality of provision for looked after children is good. Looked after children and young people live in stable, high quality placements which meet their needs effectively. Well understood thresholds for entry into care are tightly monitored by the Internal Resources and Higher Level panels which show good multi-agency attendance; ensuring both that partners understand the criteria and multi-agency support is promptly provided.
116. A creative and skilled Legal Services Team provides a high standard of support and advice to social workers and managers. This helps ensure that decisions for children and young people to become looked after through legal orders are carefully considered, timely and taken in their best interests. Through effective, case specific legal briefing meetings and regular staff training and workshops, the team continuously seeks to improve outcomes for looked after children, young people and their parents. To effectively influence and improve court processes, the team also contributes to a wide range of court based networks and they have prioritised improving of the quality of social work reports and statements for proceedings, reducing delay and minimising unnecessary court appearances for parents.
117. All looked after children and young people cases are allocated to qualified social workers. Experienced workers or managers appropriately undertake joint visiting in complex cases and are able to provide support for court

appearances where the worker is newly qualified or inexperienced. The continuity of social workers has improved significantly since the reorganisation of services in 2008 and caseloads in the two looked after children teams are realistic. Improved communication and better quality of direct practice, including timely statutory visits, was reported to inspectors by children and young people, parents, residential workers and foster carers. This has led to greater confidence in their relationships with social work staff.

118. The quality of assessments seen as part of the case file scrutiny of looked after children and young people is mostly good. Risk and protective factors are routinely assessed in a timely way, with good multi-agency contributions from health and education services. Children and young people are normally seen alone, contribute to their assessments and statutory visits, and their wishes and feelings are well recorded. Chronologies are completed well in the majority of cases. Case management overview is routinely recorded and social workers reported to inspectors that opportunities for reflection about cases had improved since the last unannounced inspection.
119. Well formulated, timely and rigorous parenting assessments are completed by the council's own assessment team which the Legal Services team confirm are seen by courts as being of consistently good quality. Good value for money is provided by the team compared with the cost of externally commissioned alternatives. Those parenting assessments seen by inspectors comprehensively addressed the equality and diversity needs of children and young people.
120. A high number of children and young people are placed with family and friends carers, with early and thorough assessments being consistently undertaken of the appropriateness of placement within extended family. Effective partnership arrangements with council housing colleagues ensures that suitable tenancies are promptly offered where housing needs are identified which would prevent such a placement from proceeding.
121. Regular high quality training to support the widespread use of life story books is being extended across the workforce to include all newly qualified social workers and there are plans to develop material specific to children and young people subject to SGOs. The council has prioritised life story book work following the reorganisation of services into separate looked after children teams in 2008. However, not all children and young people in longer term placements currently have a life story book, and the council acknowledges there is a need to undertake an audit of children and young people so that the scale of this omission can be assessed and addressed.
122. The linguistic, religious and cultural needs of looked after children and young people are assessed to a thorough standard, although only a small number are from ethnic or minority groups. Good access to interpreting

services both for children and young people and their parents and family members means that these are freely used within assessments, reviews and Care Team meetings. Support for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people is thoughtfully and sensitively assessed, although the council no longer has a dedicated team due to a reduction in demand. Placements which support cultural needs are appropriately provided, for example with access to mosques and community services, and social workers and carers are encouraged to attend relevant training and make direct links with community representatives for advice.

123. Improved communication and prompt response to meeting children and young people's needs has resulted from the co-location in 2010 of fostering and adoption services with looked after children and young people social work teams and the RHELAC team. Fostering and adoption teams have been recently reorganised under one manager, but it is too early to judge the impact of these changes on quality and outcomes for young people. Reflective supervision and challenge for this group of staff was not clearly evidenced in supervision files seen by inspectors. However, previous improvements made within the fostering team through the development of specialist roles, have led to timescales for panel approval dropping from six to four months. In order to achieve a similar result, the same changes have recently been implemented in the adoption team.
124. Good access to training and support, including post-adoption support, and good specialist advice such as from the RHELAC based psychologist, helps foster carers and adoptive parents to effectively manage complex placement needs and they report that they feel highly valued. To ensure an independent element assesses the quality of care available to children and young people, annual reviews of foster carers are chaired by an IRO employed on a sessional basis to undertake such meetings. Arrangements for managing contact are good, and parents and foster carers report that the recently developed contact facility for older children and young people at Elm House is a significant improvement on what was available previously. Some parents and grandparents of looked after children and young people seen by inspectors said that communication with social workers was poor after their child or children became looked after. While they found that foster carers and residential staff maintained excellent contact with them and provided high quality care to their children, social workers were hard to contact, and on occasions failed to notify and discuss with the parent significant events in their child's life.
125. Timely looked after reviews and care plan meetings are well attended by multi-agency partners and by parents, although children and young people's participation is inconsistent. The IRO service is valued by children and young people and by parents. However, 57% of children and young people who responded to the Care4Me survey said that they did not know or were unsure how to contact their IRO. Reviews are held regularly, although IROs are not currently able to contact all looked after children

and young people prior to reviews in compliance with care planning guidance due to high workloads. This has been recognised by the council and a new post is being recruited to. Reports for reviews are not always received in a timely manner which means that children, young people and parents who may be attending, including those with learning or communication difficulty, may not have sufficient opportunity to prepare for the meeting.

126. Care plans are well presented and formulated, with clear care planning targets and timescales. Care Team meetings are held regularly and are well attended and valued by parents and multi-agency professionals. Up to date and comprehensive databases in the fostering and adoption teams supported by good administrative support ensure that matching is undertaken promptly and efficiently. The timescale for introducing the same electronic recording system that operates within the rest of children's social care services is, however, yet to be identified. The council operates a dual system of electronic and paper files, and looked after children's files seen by inspectors were well organised.

Ambition and prioritisation

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

127. The ambition for, and prioritisation of, safeguarding services to looked after children and young people are outstanding. Wide ranging knowledge and expertise on looked after children's issues are brought together on the Corporate Parenting Committee, under the effective leadership of the lead member for children's services. An active and fully engaged membership of both elected members and officers is highly effective at championing the needs of looked after children and young people within both the council and the wider partnership. The Committee undertakes its challenge role well, for instance in promoting the need to reduce the numbers of out of authority placements, and is fully briefed through member's joint representation on Adoption and Fostering Panels, as well as by frequent updates from senior officers. A strong contribution to the work of the panel is made by looked after children and young people and they play a significant part in identifying areas of unmet need.
128. A comprehensive report by the children's scrutiny committee effectively focuses attention on the care of looked after children. The report detailed a series of practical recommendations to enhance the lives of looked after children, which significantly improved physical resource standards within the Borough's children's homes. Effective monitoring of the results has demonstrated that the improvements are sustainable.
129. Widely approachable and strongly motivational senior managers of the council have placed the needs of looked after children as a key corporate priority, by championing a change of culture towards embedded multi-disciplinary working across agency boundaries. High levels of trust and regard are invested in the council's senior managers by partners, the Chief

Executive and senior elected members, amongst whom there are clear and effective lines of communication on looked after children's issues.

130. Ambitious plans for the improvement of services to looked after children and young people are established through realistic target setting by the Looked After Children delivery plan, in which priorities are effectively identified, based on very good analysis. Highly effective communication between partners is ensured by a six weekly multi-agency and multi-disciplinary meeting for managers of services to looked after children and young people. Silo working has been reduced, and the meeting is used well to analyse the impact of initiatives on improving outcomes for looked after children and young people. Looked after children and young people's contribution to, and influence on, strategic planning is extensive and is ensured by the attendance in support at formal meetings by representatives of the participation service.

Leadership and management

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

131. Leadership and management of services to looked after children are outstanding. Financial resources are managed well and good use is made both of securing external resources to support new initiatives and of re-configuring existing resources to improve services. For example the imaginative use of residential provision for looked after children and care leavers moving towards independence.
132. A comprehensive Sufficiency Strategy demonstrates a good level of analysis of demand for looked after children services, and provides an effective framework on which to base future service commissioning. For example, the need to increase the number of placements for larger sibling groups. Planning to strengthen early intervention services for children and young people on the edges of care is clearly reflected in the document.
133. Improved and more consistent contract administration and compliance arrangements with IFAs have been achieved by the council's participation in a sub-regional consortium for managing commissioning activities. This has resulted in more effective matching and achieved an overall reduction in the cost of placements. Learning arising from the model is contributing to the development of a similar approach for independent residential children's homes. Arrangements for monitoring placements with IFAs who are not part of providers to the regional purchasing consortium have been similarly improved over the past year. Providers told inspectors that they were fully consulted about the new arrangements and that they are working well.
134. Effective use of local resources is enabled by the high level panel, when compared to similar authorities and nationally, of placements both within the local authority boundary and within 20 miles of the looked after child's home. This supports good stability for looked after children and young people such as in the maintenance of their existing school places.

135. There are highly effective arrangements for workforce development. Social workers for looked after children have access to an easily accessible training programme that has been commissioned according to their specified needs through personal development review. Development needs are not only identified and addressed through formal training sessions. Newly appointed residential workers are scheduled to work alongside experienced colleagues, who assist them to develop the skills to meet induction requirements.
136. Strong partnership working exists across all sectors at both operational and strategic level of services for looked after children and young people, and is actively encouraged by the Corporate Parenting Committee. Proactive identification of areas for improvement, which positively impact on outcomes for looked after children and young peoples include Performance Improvement Meetings. These have been recently established and are attended by Legal Services, CAFCASS and children's services to ensure that learning from complex cases is developed, and influences improvement across all agencies. In addition, the Adoption Monitoring Group provides effective oversight of adoption practice. Senior management, Legal Services and operational managers meet monthly to ensure that there is a good overview of all children awaiting adoption placements, that placement finding is progressing well and that life story book work is now being prioritised.

Performance management and quality assurance

Grade 3 (Adequate)

137. Performance management and quality assurance for looked after children are adequate. A robust culture is in evidence of managers taking responsibility for the quality of the looked after children service using performance information supplied by R&I. Good understanding of the needs of the looked after child population is also provided by comprehensive data. This is well analysed to inform commissioning and strategic planning. Several examples were seen by inspectors of the effective use of data to inform service developments such as improvements to children's homes, the virtual school and the use of SGOs. For example, the council's monitoring of placement stability figures was showing deterioration as a result of an increase in the range and reach of in house foster placements through the introduction of emergency foster carers. R&I worked with operational managers to continuously monitor and report performance at an individual case level and as a result, significantly improved performance can be demonstrated in this area.
138. A regular programme of case file audits includes consideration of looked after children files. However, audits mostly address compliance with procedures and process and are not sufficiently analytical of the quality of practice. Lessons learnt from the audits are appropriately considered at the QA Panel. However, processes to disseminate areas of good practice

or to address areas for development resulting from the audits are not sufficiently independent from service delivery and are insufficiently rigorous and robust.

139. Effective use is made of quarterly reports provided to senior children's social care managers by IROs which highlight a number of performance and quality issues arising from their challenge and scrutiny role. However, they do not report on how far the statutory care planning requirements for IROs introduced in April 2011 are being met; for example whether children and young people are being contacted by the IRO prior to their review. The IRO team is insufficiently resourced as yet to enable all the requirements and duties to be fully implemented. However, funding for an extra post has been secured in order to address current gaps in the service and an additional IRO is being recruited. Line management of the IROs is the same as that for service delivery and while the IRO service asserts its independence, this structure does not facilitate suitable independence.
140. Insufficient analysis is provided by the IRO annual report of the reasons for the fluctuations in numbers of the looked after children population and the contribution being made by IROs in reducing it. Although it is descriptive about the current and projected role of the IRO and details statistical data, the report is not sufficiently outcome focused in terms of the impact of the IRO challenge role, quality assurance information nor does it indicate the level of involvement of children and young people.
141. A clear commitment is demonstrated by the Corporate Parenting Committee to monitoring the performance of services to looked after children. The Committee receives regular performance monitoring reports, and reports of visits to children's homes under regulation 33 are routinely submitted to the committee, along with details of regular monitoring visits to service providers of out of borough placements. After a sustained reduction in the numbers of looked after children and young people, the numbers have recently risen very quickly. Formal analysis of the reasons for the increase or of the profile of the children and young people has not yet been undertaken by the council. However, the increased demand for placements has been effectively met locally through a good increase in foster care including family and friends carers, with the latest figures from the council showing these account for 13.3% of all placements.

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	Adequate
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	Good
Performance management and quality assurance	Good
Partnership working	Good
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	Outstanding
Enjoying and achieving	Outstanding
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	Adequate
Equality and diversity	Good