

Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services

Northumberland

Inspection dates: 19 March 2012 to 30 March 2012
Reporting inspector: Martin Ayres HMI

Age group: All
Published: 14 May 2012

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Contents

About this inspection	2
The inspection judgements and what they mean	2
Service information	3
Safeguarding services	6
Overall effectiveness	6
Capacity for improvement	8
Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people	10
Children and young people are safe and feel safe	10
Quality of provision	16
The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe	12
Ambition and prioritisation	20
Leadership and management	22
Performance management and quality assurance	23
Partnership working	24
Services for looked after children	26
Overall effectiveness	26
Capacity for improvement	28
How good are outcomes for looked after children and care leavers?	30
Being healthy	30
Staying safe	31
Enjoying and achieving	33
Making a positive contribution, including user engagement	34
Economic well-being	35
Quality of provision	36
Ambition and prioritisation	38
Leadership and management	39
Performance management and quality assurance	40
Record of main findings	41

About this inspection

1. The purpose of the inspection is to evaluate the contribution made by relevant services in the local area towards ensuring that children and young people are properly safeguarded and to determine the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers. The inspection team consisted of four of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and one inspector from the Care Quality Commission. The inspection was carried out under the Children Act 2004.
2. The evidence evaluated by inspectors included:
 - discussions with children and young people receiving services, front line 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 75 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 June 2011
 - interviews and focus groups with front line professionals, representatives of agencies on the NSCB and FACT board, managers and senior staff from NHS North of Tyne, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and Northumberland Tyne and Wear Mental Health 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
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Service information

4. Northumberland is geographically the sixth largest county in England but with a population of approximately 313,000 people is the least densely populated. Children and young people aged 0 to 19 years constitute 21.5% of the total population. The largest towns are Ashington, Bedlington, Berwick, Blyth, Cramlington, Hexham, Morpeth and Alnwick which are set within extensive rural areas and uplands; 16 areas of the county are ranked amongst the 10% most deprived in England with 18.6% children aged below 16 years defined as living in poverty. Although this level is similar to the national average it masks the high level of poverty and deprivation in some defined areas of the county where almost two out of every three children live in households which are dependant on worklessness benefits. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is 15.3%. At the last census in 2001 it was estimated that 99% of the total population were of White British origin. However, there has been subsequent inward migration from European Union Accession countries to areas such as Berwick and Alnwick and children and young people from Black and Minority Ethnic groups now constitute approximately 4.7% of the entire pupil population. There are currently 61 heritage languages spoken by children in all schools. Gypsy, Roma, Irish Traveller and Traveller pupils constitute 0.12% of the total pupil population.
5. The Family and Children's Trust (FACT) is fully established with representation from the County Council, Northumbria Police, NHS North of Tyne, Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Trust and Northumbria Healthcare, Jobcentre Plus, schools and colleges, and voluntary and community sector organisations. Strategic plans for children's services across the partnership are set out in the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14. A Health and Well-being Board is also established which oversees a range of children's services and ensures an appropriate link to services for adults in the county. Child Protection and Safeguarding is overseen by the Northumberland Safeguarding Children Board (NSCB) which has an independent chair and a range of sub-groups. More recently a children's joint commissioning group has been developed which builds on the commissioning arrangements already in place across the partnership. A wide range of voluntary and community sector organisations are represented on boards and local planning groups. Currently, there are 273 looked after children (45.4 per 10,000) and 198 (32.9 per 10,000) children subject to child protection plans. In addition there are 2,215 children in need receiving services from locality based teams. Annually the service receives in the region of 4,600 referrals, processes 9,000 contacts and completes 2,600 initial assessments and 2,200 core assessments. A further 700 child protection investigations are undertaken jointly with Northumbria Police.

6. The council's Children's Services is organised into five service areas which include Safeguarding and services to Looked After Children. Early Years provision, Schools, Performance, Employability and Skills and Planning and Organisation are provided as a single service. The Safeguarding and Looked After Children service provides locality based social work teams in Berwick, Alnwick, Wansbeck, Blyth Valley and Tynedale plus an Intake and Referral Team (IRT) based in Wansbeck. The service operates five residential homes comprising three open units and two secure in addition to one respite unit, a county-wide disabled children's team, dedicated fostering and permanence teams, family support teams and a dedicated targeted adolescent service (TAS) that includes youth offending, leaving care (16+ team), Positive Futures, the Teenage Pregnancy Team and the substance misuse services. An out-of-hours service is also fully established. Children on the edge of care are supported through the provision of a Children's Support Team with qualified social work and family support 365 days per year. The common assessment framework (CAF) was initiated during 2007/08, with 555 assessments taking place during 2010/11. The CAF is also used to support step-up and step-down arrangements between universal, targeted and specialist provision.
7. Northumberland's Youth Offending Service is delivered through a multi-agency team including qualified social work staff, support workers and parenting workers, police officers, probation, education and health staff. The team delivers interventions across prevention and targeted services. The targeted adolescent service works closely with housing providers and the voluntary and community sector to deliver specialist housing for young people with a history of challenging behaviours. Additionally, the 'Moving On' project provides housing and support services. The dedicated 16+ service provides services for looked after young people and those leaving care until they are aged 21 years or 24 years if in education. Northumberland's Employability and Skills Service was formed in April 2011 and works in collaboration with a wide range of public and private sector partners to develop opportunities for all young people.
8. Across Northumberland there are 20 designated children's centres organised in four locality areas or clusters which are aligned with other local health and social care provision in the North, West, Central and South East areas of the County. Children's Centres in the North and West are managed by the council with the exception of one small rural centre which is led by a voluntary management committee but is delivered as part of West locality children's centre provision. In Central and South East contracts have recently been awarded to Action for Children and Barnardos for the management of centres in those areas. All children's centres provide a wide range of integrated early years provision offering both universal and targeted services and there are strong partnerships with Health, Social Care and the Fire Service. Outreach to more rural areas is achieved through the use of minibuses and play vans and through the co-location of facilities in the North and West. West locality children's

centres provide support to families at Albemarle Barracks in partnership with the Army Welfare Service and a range of other local provision including health, educational psychology and library services. There are 318 registered childminders, 60 full day care settings, 66 sessional day care settings, 62 out of school settings and 14 crèches.

9. Within Northumberland there are 181 schools attended by over 46,900 pupils. School size varies significantly across the county with the smallest school having only three pupils on roll and the largest schools or academies having over 2,000 pupils. Currently, there are 124 first or primary schools, 31 middle (including two academies), 14 high (including three academies), two all age academies and 10 special schools including the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and a Secure unit. In addition to the high schools and the all age academies, Post-16 education is provided by one further education college which based in Ashington. Northumberland has a virtual school for looked after children with an established virtual school head teacher and a governing body provided by the Multi-Agency Looked After Partnership (MALAP). A range of additional support services are provided to support children's learning including a dedicated Education Support for Looked After Children's (ESLAC) team and an Education Other Than At School Service (EOTAS) and local inclusion support teams (LIST.)The proportion of school pupils with a statement of Special Educational Need is approximately 3.2% mainly associated with moderate learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
10. Health services in Northumberland are commissioned and planned by NHS North of Tyne. Acute and community health services are provided by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. Community health services include children's community health services. Acute hospital services, accident and emergency and midwifery, are provided in Wansbeck and Hexham District General Hospitals. In patient paediatric services are provided by the same Trust in North Tyneside General Hospital. Tertiary health services are available through Newcastle Hospitals Foundation Trust. There are 46 General Practitioner (GP) practices in Northumberland, 44 dental contracts, 77 NHS community pharmacy contracts, and 39 mandatory contracts for optometry. Mental Health services, including child and adolescent mental health Services (CAMHS), are provided by Northumberland Tyne and Wear Mental Health Foundation Trust.
11. Northumbria Police cover Northumberland in addition to Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland, and South and North Tyneside.

Safeguarding services

Overall effectiveness

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

12. The overall effectiveness of the council and its partners in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people is outstanding. Ambition and prioritisation in respect of safeguarding are outstanding across the partnership leading to good quality services with some examples of outstanding practice. Strategic plans are explicit in setting clear objectives for safeguarding provision and performance targets are increasingly ambitious. There is a very good track record of sustained improvement. Unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment services in the county in 2010 and 2011 identified that services were operating efficiently with no priority actions. The area for development in 2011 relating to social worker caseloads in some parts of the county has been addressed through the appointment of eight additional social workers. This inspection has confirmed the effective identification by the local authority and partners of children and young people who may be at risk of harm and the provision of a wide range of responsive services to meet assessed needs. Staff at all levels demonstrate their commitment to good quality services and are highly motivated.
13. Partnership working is outstanding with many examples of high quality joint work in individual cases and within projects across the county. The role of schools, police, fire service, voluntary and community sector organisations alongside health and children's services is effective in responding to individual safeguarding concerns in addition to contributing to safer neighbourhoods and communities. The specific contribution of health services to safeguarding is good. Children and young people report they feel safe in Northumberland and know how to obtain help if required. This inspection has endorsed this position as well as confirming that children and young people are kept safe through concerted effort. The partnership has good awareness of the needs of local populations and tailors individual and strategic plans accordingly. Responsiveness to the needs of the population, including children with disabilities, is good. Parents with disabled children and young people report they are generally satisfied with joint services.
14. FACT and NSCB are fully established and highly valued by partners. The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) is not represented on NSCB although significant attempts have been made to secure appropriate attendance. Both boards provide clear strategic direction in tackling any new aspects of need in addition to sustaining good quality service provision across a large and diverse county. The Children and young persons Plan 2011-2014 is being used well to drive forward services and to ensure that there is good user participation in strategic and individual planning. Comprehensive frameworks for

outstanding performance management are embedded in practice and there are clear processes across the partnership and within organisations to measure safeguarding outcomes and effectiveness. Scrutiny arrangements are robust and accountabilities clearly stated. Considerable effort is being made across the partnership to shift the balance of services to support earlier forms of intervention and prevention. Networks of local services, including children's centres and outreach provision, are aiding this objective. Partnership confidence in this objective is reflected in performance trends and in the capacity of lead professionals to use common assessment tools and team around the child approaches as a means of supporting children, young people and their families. This is providing professionals and agencies with opportunities to appropriately divert some lower level cases from direct referral to children's social care. Thresholds for service access are clearly defined and widely understood. Protocols for identifying children and young people admitted to accident and emergency services are robust and arrangements for responding to children and young people who go missing are effective.

15. Workforce planning and development are well organised with good systems in place to ensure safe staff recruitment. Supervision is regular and staff report they feel well supported in their work by their managers and value opportunities for personal development. However, there are some variations in the consistency of staff training and supervision in some health services which is being actively addressed. Safeguarding cases are allocated to suitably experienced and qualified staff and capacity within teams is being closely monitored. FACT has been influential in modernising services to support children and young people with significant emotional needs but the impact of these developments has not yet been formally evaluated to test impact.
16. The quality of provision is good with outstanding work being undertaken through the targeted adolescent service. Initial and core assessments are completed to a consistently good or better standard across the county and assessments of need and risk are timely. Frameworks for identifying 'signs of safety' and 'hidden harm' are used well. Case planning is outcomes focused and underpinned by good quality risk and need analysis and user engagement. Independent reviewing officers (IROs) fulfil their main responsibilities in chairing conferences and confirming plans to good standards. However, their capacity to undertake pre-conference and review direct work with children, young people and their parents is reduced. The format of plans and letters to parents to advise them of the outcome of planning and legal meetings are sometimes too complicated in terms of language used and the actions needed to resolve specific concerns. The quality of recording in respect of safeguarding and child protection is good overall but recording of some children in need plans is less consistent.

17. The role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is firmly embedded with increasing levels of contacts and representation and complaints systems are established and being monitored. However, the link between this role and private fostering arrangements is not yet fully embedded. Complaints systems are in place but some young people responding to a survey for this inspection indicated they were not routinely made aware of the systems or how to gain support through advocacy. Strategy meetings are generally well attended although police attendance has been more erratic following recent changes to police force structures. This is being actively addressed by the Chief Constable of Northumbria Police. In all other respects police engagement in safeguarding in Northumberland is outstanding. Although there is good awareness of the needs of young carers with good responsiveness to any safeguarding concerns in individual cases there is a lack of strategic coherence in the provision of specific support services.

Capacity for improvement

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

18. Capacity for improvement in safeguarding is outstanding. The local authority and partners have a track record of continuous improvement which has been confirmed through a succession of inspections and through self-audits and evaluation. This inspection has validated the comprehensive and accurate self-evaluation of performance in respect of safeguarding in the county. Management and leadership of services are outstanding and supported by outstanding performance management and quality assurance systems. Where gaps in services have been identified or service demands have increased prompt action has been taken to secure additional resources. Political leaders have been responsive to new demands where a sound business case has been made. They also ensure there is a robust level of scrutiny on safeguarding provision. The workforce across the partnership is well organised, trained and committed to the delivery of high quality services. Staff are given good support and have access to good training and development opportunities. Financial management arrangements are secure with tight controls and commitment to achieving value for money in all aspects of service delivery. There is a history of successful service commissioning and new arrangements within FACT are ensuring that commissioning opportunities are being taken forward. Robust procurement arrangements are established.
19. The quality of services is consistently good with some outstanding examples of practice. The partnership is ambitious in securing services which compare with the best in the country and adopts an outward facing approach to learning and sharing best practice. Performance against key indicators is at least good with a trend of continuous improvement. FACT and NSCB are firmly established and operating well in setting priorities and delivering good outcomes.

Areas for improvement

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

Within three months:

- ensure that the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) is fully represented at an appropriate level on NSCB
- improve the consistency of recording of lower level children in need plans and ensure the language used in written correspondence to parents is clear and facilitates their understanding of any concerns and the actions required to resolve identified issues
- ensure there is a consistent policy in place across health services to underpin staff training and supervision and this is closely monitored by NHS North of Tyne against agreed standards of compliance
- establish a process for alerting the LADO to any significant safeguarding issues relating to private fostering and ensure that safeguarding training includes staff awareness of private fostering in the context of safeguarding.

Within six months:

- strengthen the joint strategy for responding to the specific needs of young carers through the formulation of a coherent strategy for service delivery and support
- conduct a joint audit of services for children and young people with significant emotional needs to determine the reach and effectiveness of services and to address any remaining gaps in provision
- review the capacity of the IROs to enable them to routinely undertake direct work with children, young people and parents prior to conferences and looked after children reviews.

Safeguarding outcomes for children and young people

Children and young people are safe and feel safe **Grade 2 (Good)**

21. The contribution of the partnership to ensuring children are safe and feel safe is good with some examples of outstanding practice including the focus on managing risks associated with young people. In this connection Northumberland has been successful in achieving the Local Innovation Award in the category of keeping children and young people safe with the aim of promoting best practice through peer learning and knowledge transfer. Senior staff from the county have provided support to other local authorities to enable them to implement similar models. A wide range of joint services are in place to promote the early identification of children and young people who are at risk of harm with good awareness of safeguarding issues across the partnership and county. NSCB is active in raising safeguarding awareness through the comprehensive use of good quality information material, staff training, public events and clear safeguarding strategies. The consistency of services and responsiveness to safeguarding issues is good across the county regardless of the diversity of local populations and levels of service demand.
22. The role of the LADO is well embedded in local practice and robust arrangements are in place to ensure children and young people are safeguarded. Management information is used well to monitor the impact of this service and any emerging trends in respect of referral patterns in order to inform strategies and resource allocation. Good attention has been given to raising awareness of the LADO role across the whole partnership with clear evidence of an increasing trend in LADO contacts. Effective working relationships between the LADO and the police child abuse investigation are in place with monthly monitoring meetings in order to exchange pertinent information and emerging concerns. The representation and complaints systems are well established and linked well to the role of the LADO. There is good evidence of responsiveness to individual concerns raised by users and collation of complaints information to help inform learning. However, some children and young people responding to a survey for this inspection and who met inspectors stated they were not entirely clear how to make a complaint or to access advocacy.
23. Staff recruitment processes within the local authority are appropriately established to monitor the suitability of staff to work with children and young people. The importance of this approach is firmly recognised by all partner agencies including the voluntary and community sector. Personnel files are well ordered with up to date criminal records checks being closely monitored and reviewed every three years. This information and references are checked before staff start work and there is consistently good practice in relation to the checking photo identification. Robust

action is taken where shortfalls are identified through regular internal audits such as ensuring copies of General Social Care Council Registration documents are up to date. Staff qualifications are also routinely checked and verified but copies of qualification documents, although held on most records, are not always held in the same files.

24. Responsiveness to safeguarding and child protection concerns is timely and facilitated by strong partnerships established with schools, police, voluntary and community sector, adult services and faith based organisations. Statutory visits are carried out in a timely manner and are appropriately task focused. There is a highly effective multi-agency approach to safeguarding and managing risk across the partnership. The specialist social worker provides a responsive service to reduce the risk to children and young people who go missing, particularly in relation to child sexual exploitation and repeated incidents. Prompt return interviews and direct work with young people are undertaken with appropriate liaison with other local authorities and police forces. Work undertaken by 'street safe' is ensuring a timely and proportionate response to young people who are misusing alcohol. The children's Support Team is providing one to one support to families to reduce the need for children and young people to enter local authority care.
25. The 'Signs of safety' framework is facilitating consistently good practice in relation to securing the views of children, young people and their families in analysing needs and risks. These are well considered in assessments and there are responsive arrangements in place to adapt service delivery following user feedback. For example, the establishment of the 'phones for safety' initiative and holding risk management meetings in schools is the result of such feedback. Young people seen by inspectors state that their plans have made a difference to them in feeling safe and that they have been able to make better choices as a result in keeping safe. Although they often attend case conferences and core groups and feel that they are listened to and can make a useful contribution they do not always have access to copies of their child protection plan in a format that is readily understandable. The role played by the police in the promotion of safeguarding across is highly effective and based on responsiveness to individual and collective vulnerability. Police liaison with local schools is particularly good. Attendance at multi-agency public protection arrangement meetings is outstanding and the framework for the operation of this meeting is well established. Practitioners report there is good confidence in these systems based on the strength in partnership working and joint commitment.
26. Outstanding support is available to those young people who are at high risk of offending through the 'moving on' project. Practitioners describe how effective it has been in allowing young people to feel and be safe in a positive environment which, in turn, has promoted positive engagement with ongoing support services. Intensive multi-agency support is offered

to vulnerable young people with effective case management and good use of team around the child approaches to reduce the prevalence of risk taking behaviours. Clear progress is being made by young people as the result of focused support including direct work around keeping safe, promotion of school attendance and advice about sexual health, protection of young people at risk of child sexual exploitation and substance misuse. The family recovery service provides a good range of support services to children and their families to promote protection and build personal resilience. There is an effective and co-ordinated approach to the management of domestic violence with prompt responses to individual, local and regional need.

27. The very large majority of schools and other settings are judged good or better at inspection in keeping children safe. Safeguarding provision is judged to be effective in local authority children's homes, fostering and adoption with the exception of one children's home which was judged inadequate and where the aims and purpose have been transformed and a robust improvement plan is in place. Although there is an accountable system for the monitoring and auditing of private fostering arrangements and scrutiny by NSCB, not all front line staff are fully aware of the link with safeguarding issues. Current publicity campaigns to raise private fostering awareness do not sufficiently focus on the independent schools sector, ethnic minority groups or the Albemarle garrison.
28. Northumberland was the centre of international media attention in 2010 when a member of the public was shot and killed and a police officer was shot and seriously injured by a lone gunman. The perpetrator was located in Rothbury, a small market town, which was immediately locked down pending his capture. The joint management of this incident demonstrates the outstanding leadership across the partnership in responding to exceptional and unpredicted circumstances and where children and young people were in a potentially vulnerable situation. The work of the local school, police, fire service, local authority and health partners ensured that children and young people were protected from harm and given appropriate ongoing support to deal with this traumatic situation. Learning from this high profile incident has been outstanding and is contributing to current community safety and emergency planning arrangements.

Quality of provision

Grade 2 (good)

29. The quality of provision is good. The local authority and partners are taking concerted steps to shift the balance of provision towards early intervention and prevention with mounting evidence of success. There is a wide range of preventative and early intervention services available to support families, including children's centres, targeted support provision and outreach services in more rural areas. There is imaginative use of resources in response to local need including the role played by the Fire

Service alongside children centre provision in some areas and the work of the family recovery service aimed at reducing the need for children and young people to enter local authority care. There has been a trend in reducing the number of children in care as the result of targeted services and an increased level of activity in respect of early intervention. The use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to co-ordinate services and team around the child approaches are becoming embedded with increasing examples of use in the context of step down approaches. The rate of CAFs undertaken per 10,000 population under 18 years is steadily increasing from 88.6 in 2010/11 to 90 in 2011/12. The target for 2013/14 is 98 based on the development of greater confidence amongst lead professionals in the effectiveness of this approach. A pilot scheme is operational to test the viability of working with complex children in need cases which is being carefully monitored by NSCB which will also evaluate the effectiveness of this pilot scheme before it is rolled out across the county as a whole.

30. Thresholds for service access are clearly defined and are regularly reviewed in light of case audits and performance management information. As greater emphasis is being placed on early intervention and prevention children's social care is ensuring that advice and guidance is available to referring agencies on the appropriateness of levels of referrals and whether access to services could be achieved in other ways. This is ensuring safe monitoring of all referrals by experienced social care professionals at a stage of transition although some referrals by agencies could be filtered at an earlier stage, including some domestic violence referrals from the police and referrals from other agencies where confidence in lead professional roles is still developing. A safe, timely and responsive service is provided by the initial response team, with effective senior decision-making in place and prompt allocation of work to appropriately experienced workers. The process for transfer to other teams is smooth and follows a well prepared process. All the locality teams and out of hours service have a keen and appropriate focus on ensuring the immediate protection of children and young people. Social worker visiting patterns are good and meet or exceed statutory requirements. Children and young people are being seen alone and their views are captured and used to influence planning. The quality of both initial and core assessments is high and a level of consistency has been achieved across all the teams in the county. The majority of assessments are timely and performance in this respect is comparatively good. For example, the rate of core assessments completed in time in 2010/11 in Northumberland is above comparator areas and the England average. Unannounced inspections in 2010 and 2011 of contact, referral and assessment services identified that services were operating well with no priority actions. In 2011 an area for development was identified in respect of reducing social worker caseloads in some areas of the county. This matter was immediately addressed by the local authority and additional resources were allocated to appoint a further eight social workers.

Caseloads are now at an acceptable level overall but are still slightly higher than average in the Cramlington, Ashington and Children with disabilities teams. Caseloads are closely monitored by experienced managers.

31. The analysis of needs and risks and protective factors are good and there is effective use of 'signs of safety' approaches and partnership awareness of 'hidden harm' factors. Assessments are responsive to diversity with good consideration of culture, religion, ethnicity, disability, gender sensitivity, honour based violence and the needs of the traveller community. Core assessments are regularly reviewed and updated in light of changing circumstances, needs and risks. The quality of partnership working in individual cases is at least good with some outstanding examples of impact in supporting parents to make changes or in decisive action to protect vulnerable children and young people. There is a strong sense of common purpose and understanding of safeguarding priorities and issues across the partnership.
32. Cases are allocated promptly to suitable qualified and experienced staff and managers demonstrate good oversight of cases. Most children in need and protection plans are clear and specify intended outcomes. However, there is some variation in the quality of recording of lower level children in need plans. IROs fulfil their responsibilities and provide challenge where needed on individual cases and the effectiveness of plans. Plans are regularly monitored, reviewed and updated. Although the caseloads of IROs are acceptable and compare to levels in similar areas current IRO capacity reduces opportunities for pre-conference activity in some cases such as helping parents and children and young people to understand reports and issues arising. Case conference reports and minutes are sufficiently detailed and presentation is good overall. However, some written communication with parents is over-complicated which is reducing key messages in respect of the actions parents need to take to improve their parenting skills. Police commitment to safeguarding is outstanding with clear examples of effective action to protect children and young people from harm. However, police attendance at case conferences and face to face strategy meetings has recently reduced in light of resource constraints. This issue has already been identified through safeguarding inspections in other areas covered by Northumbria police and it is understood that this matter is under review by the Chief Constable.
33. The level of domestic violence referrals in the county is high with a significant proportion linked to alcohol and substance misuse. Effective liaison arrangements are in place between the police the initial response team, out of hours service and other social care teams to ensure risks are being identified. Police notification is direct to children's social services who then notify health visitors and school nurses. More sophisticated screening processes for domestic violence referrals within the child abuse investigation unit are showing impact in reducing the volume of direct

referrals to children's social care. Nevertheless, it is acknowledged that there are more opportunities to develop lower level responses for working with some perpetrators of domestic violence and in relation to providing robust alternative service options. One to one work is delivered through 'Freedom project' and 'Cease 24' is commissioned to provide a court based service to victims of domestic violence in addition to victim support. There are well established links with housing providers and refuges enabling an effective and targeted response to identified needs. For example, very good practical support in relation to supporting victims of domestic violence through target hardening and the provision of safe accommodation. The 'Remain Scheme', developed in direct response to feedback from victims of domestic violence, has enabled 33 families to remain in their homes with appropriate levels of safeguarding and protection.

34. Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) are firmly established and all relevant agencies and groups are represented. MARAC and 'Cease 24' identified through their evaluation systems the need for financial assistance with the application of non-molestation orders and this service is now available. Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) are also well established in the county and ensuring that there is effective oversight and monitoring of adults who may pose a threat to children and young people.
35. Effective work is being undertaken in schools in respect of safeguarding, including relationships, sex education and keeping safe. Headteachers and school governors are providing good leadership in respect of safeguarding and identifying pupils who may be at risk of harm. Needs assessment are being undertaken to inform the future focus of services aimed to identify any gaps in provision. Although there are some projects for young carers in the county there is a lack of a coherent strategy for ensuring this group of children and young people have access to relevant support services. The family and children trust is aware of this position and has made bids for grants to add capacity to this service but, so far, bids have been unsuccessful. The Disabled Children's Service is good, responsive to safeguarding concerns and supported through strong multi-agency links with health, education and voluntary sector partners. Team members are well informed on all safeguarding matters and contribute well to protection planning and the delivery of relevant services. The unannounced inspection in June 2011 positively noted that the children with disabilities team provides effective specialist support to area teams to ensure the safeguarding needs of disabled children and young people are addressed and their views and wishes are identified.

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. Arrangements for the overview of child deaths in the county are effective. The Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP), which also operates across Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland is appropriately constituted and ensuring there is a good examination of relevant and significant issues arising from cases. An example is the reporting of a cluster of suicides of teenagers to CDOP and the careful analysis of identifiable risks. A joint strategy has been adopted and implemented across the partnership. Additionally, good local arrangements are established to promote learning from local, regional and national cases with clear evidence of effective and wide dissemination to influence future practice. Appropriate arrangements are in place for the line management, training and supervision of designated and named professionals across Northumberland health services. This is supporting this staff group well in fulfilling their strategic and operational responsibilities in accordance with national guidance on safeguarding children and young people and the Intercollegiate Guidance (2010).
37. Effective governance structures are in place across health services and health boards have systems in place to assure themselves on the effectiveness of safeguarding practice in their organisations in respect of children and young people. However, the Safeguarding Committee in the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust has not yet fully established a clear process for coordinating and reporting on the effectiveness of safeguarding practice and activity particularly in respect of a training need analysis and access to levels of training by health staff. Good progress is being made within Northumberland Tyne and Wear to develop good training and supervision arrangements but some variation remains across other trusts in ensuring practice is fully consistent. NSCB provides good support to health agencies in the provision of Level three multi-agency training which is very much valued by staff and managers. This is also helping the trust in re-designing its training plan. Although the training of GPs in safeguarding children is well developed their direct contribution to child protection conferences is variable. GPs who were contacted during this inspection stated they appreciate the level of support provided by the named GP in embedding any changes to safeguarding children policy, practice or guidance.
38. Health practitioners interviewed during the course of this inspection report that thresholds for service access are well understood and there are clear escalation processes to resolve any areas of professional disagreement. They also value the use of the 'signs of safety' model which supports the use of a common language across the partnership and consistent understanding of potential risk factors. Good arrangements are in place in the Accident and Emergency department at Wansbeck Hospital and local

urgent care and minor injuries units in Northumberland to identify children and young people who may be at risk of harm to ensure they are appropriately safeguarded. A comprehensive, well understood coding system is used to indicate if there are any other concerns around a child or young person, for example if a child protection plan in place, they are a relative of a known offender against children or they have assessed special needs.

39. All children attending Accident and Emergency services are appropriately assessed using an assessment tool (CWILTED) which is fully compliant with guidance provided by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence on assessing children and young people for non-accidental injury. Monthly audits are undertaken to ensure that practitioners are completing their assessments to required standards and to monitor ongoing good practice. Although early identification processes are in respect of young people who attend accident and emergency services following alcohol or substance misuse and subsequent referral to relevant services there have been some reported difficulties with sharing information. In order to overcome this problem all cases are now referred direct to children's social care teams who collate information and pass this on to relevant services. Effective paediatric liaison is carried out by practitioners working in the paediatric unit. Accident and Emergency services staff follow a recently introduced pathway which facilitates good support from local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to young people who attend the department following self-harm incidents

40. Young people have good access to effective education, support and advice on alcohol and substance misuse. The Health and Well-being team work closely with schools to support education around substance misuse and is increasingly linking this to good work on sex and relationship education as part of an overall risk resilience approach. A policy on managing drug incidents in school has been developed which ensures that if a child or young person is either at risk of school exclusion or has been excluded through substance misuse then an appropriate package of care is put in place to provide ongoing support to the young person. Young people who have substance misuse problems and have additional emotional health needs are seen by CAMHS practitioners as part of Northumberland's Young People's Service. Good partnership working between services ensures that a co-ordinated approach is taken to support this vulnerable group of young people. There is a good range of integrated contraception and sexual health services across the county complemented by a domiciliary service to support young people who are particularly vulnerable. The partnership is making good progress in continuing to reduce the number of conceptions of young people under 18 and sex and relationship education is taught as part of the core curriculum to good effect. The rate of teenage pregnancy in the county is the lowest in the North East at 33.8 per 1,000 women aged 15-17 years. Comprehensive assessments are undertaken for all children under 16 years of age to

assess their capacity to consent according to the Frazer Guidance and staff are well briefed on when to refer any safeguarding or child protection concerns to children and families teams. Although targeted adolescent services are particularly effective in Northumberland, sexual health services are not yet fully embedded within this service.

41. Good arrangements are in place to assess vulnerability in pregnancy and pregnant women receive comprehensive assessments during their initial booking appointment. In response to a recent finding from a serious case review, women are now seen alone at the booking appointment and this gives the opportunity for confidential discussion of sensitive issues including any potential safeguarding matters. There are also regular opportunities for midwives to assess any changes to risks through scheduled ante-natal appointments and good systems are in place to monitor clinic attendance. Assessments of vulnerability are appropriately shared with GPs, Health visitor and other professionals who may be involved in ante-natal care. This is ensuring a responsive and co-ordinated approach to care at a particularly important time and in the provision of good quality advice and guidance. Teenagers who are pregnant are supported well through the development of individual care plans co-ordinated by key workers. Every month a multi-agency targeted Teenage Pregnancy Support Group meets to discuss all teenagers aged under 19 years who are pregnant to determine the level and nature of support that is needed. This model of support is thought to be effective although it has not yet been formally evaluated. Midwives make home visits to young teenage mothers who do not wish to engage in group work or find it difficult to attend the main ante-natal clinics. A dedicated scanning clinic as well as parentcraft classes is available for young mothers to be.
42. The perinatal mental health service which is led by a consultant is effective in ensuring that pregnant women who need additional support for their emotional health and well-being are appropriately supported. The service incorporates a course to provide early support to women and has been well received. Pregnant women who misuse alcohol or substances are also supported well by a co-ordinated package of care delivered across the partnership with ante-natal care provided by community midwives and the substance misuse midwife. A successful and well attended joint special ante-natal clinic is available and led by a consultant obstetrician with an interest in addiction alongside a specialist psychiatrist. Good partnership working is ensuring that careful and coordinated attention is being given to unborn babies in the context of ongoing safeguarding needs. Timely pre-birth conferences are appropriately planned where potential risks are identified with good service coordination across the partnership within the North of Tyne Birth Plan. This is shared with parents who indicate they have benefited from this co-ordinated approach to safeguarding newborn infants.

43. Health visiting and school nurses effectively safeguard children and young people. There is good delivery of the healthy child programmes through which health visitors are able to identify actual and potential vulnerabilities in families. Caseloads are manageable and team flexibility is facilitating appropriate cover when needed due to staff vacancies or increased service demands. School nurses carry out detailed and good quality health needs assessment on any child that is referred to the service in order to identify any additional support needs. Health visitors and school nurses also contribute effectively to child protection conferences with the majority of conferences having public health practitioner attendance and produce high quality reports for use within the conference. Good attention is given to the mix of health staff and their skills and experience within service planning and delivery, including CAF, child in need services and child protection. This is exemplified through good quality multi-agency work with vulnerable families and early support to reduce the potential for escalating child protection concerns.
44. The school nursing service is good and support is given to health aspects of the school curriculum with a specific focus on tackling obesity with highly effective outcomes. School nurses deliver targeted interventions with young people who smoke as well as other group work on self-esteem and improving risk resilience. Most high schools have a school nurse drop-in clinic and a contraceptive clinic and some are accredited within the 'you're welcome' scheme.
45. The Family and Children Trust identified concerns about the delivery and effectiveness of CAMHS which resulted in a review and service re-design. Although considerable work is taking place to harmonise working practices across the county to ensure equity of service provision and access some delays are reported in the availability of services in some areas and work to establish a single access point is not yet completed owing to information technology issues. Assessment and diagnosis pathway used within CAMHS for children and young people where autistic spectrum disorders are under consideration are not yet fully compliant with NICE guidance. Adult mental health staff demonstrate good awareness on the impact of parental mental health on children and young people. The implementation of a 'think family' approach within the Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust and link staff are aiding the effective identification of vulnerable families, children and young people.
46. Children with complex health needs receive good support from dedicated and enthusiastic multi-disciplinary teams and there is good access to relevant therapy services. Multi-disciplinary clinics are held in localities across the county to allow families to discuss their child's needs and care at one appointment. Families state that the clinics are supportive and they appreciate the way practitioners are collaborating on their behalf leading to consistency and reducing family disruption. Highly effective arrangements are in place to ensure that transition into formal education

and subsequently from education into adult services are well planned and co-ordinated. Families of children with complex health needs have good access to respite care and community children's nursing teams provide home-based respite care through child health carers. The team also delivers training to practitioners across the partnership on meeting the specific health needs of young people. Parents of children with difficulties state that access to aids to daily living is good overall but the provision and quality of incontinence aids was sometimes problematic and there have been delays in the provision of housing adaptations.

47. Good and appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that child protection medicals are carried out by suitably qualified paediatricians and for children and young people to be examined following alleged sexual abuse in the Newcastle resource which is a child-friendly and accredited specialist facility. As far as practicable the paediatrician who undertakes the child protection medical is invited to attend the child protection conference. This is good practice. A highly effective procedure is established across the partnership for responding to concerns relating to injuries to non-mobile babies.

Ambition and prioritisation

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

48. Ambition and prioritisation of safeguarding are outstanding. The local authority and partners have a comprehensive understanding of the needs of children and families and are delivering a wide range of quality and appropriate services to respond to the diverse needs of this population. The partnership is ensuring that children and young people are safeguarded and that vulnerability is identified and acted upon through concerted effort. This approach is highly relevant to the geography and demography of Northumberland and the requirement and the balance to be struck between consistent levels of operation and need to respond to local needs in different ways. The partnership has underpinned all service strategies with clear principles and values which are set out in the Children and Young People's Plan 2011 to 2014 and other planning frameworks. Safeguarding children and young people is given the highest priority within council services and the corporate management and political commitment to keeping children and young people safe is manifest. This ambition is shared by all partner agencies who are ensuring that safeguarding has high priority and there is full commitment to the best outcomes for vulnerable children and young people. For example, Northumbria police, despite having to make financial savings, have actually increased the level of manpower associated directly with safeguarding. Additionally the voluntary and community sector is adding considerable value to the reach of services and health provision is being suitably prioritised.

49. The FACT board is highly valued by all partners and is active in identifying service gaps, driving services forward and monitoring impact and outcomes. Good examples of this include the strengthening of CAMHS and the establishment of a highly effective targeted adolescent service. NSCB is independently chaired and holds FACT and other boards and groups to account for the quality of safeguarding provision and partnership working. Partner representation within strategic planning is good with the exception of Cafcass despite repeated attempts on the part of NSCB to gain suitable representation. Strategies for safeguarding and child protection are comprehensive, cover all relevant safeguarding issues and set realistic but increasingly ambitious performance targets. Staff across the partnership have good access to quality training and development opportunities including direct learning from local and national cases.
50. There is clear understanding of strategic priorities at all organisational levels and staff feel they are well supported by their own managers and have good access to senior managers and political leaders who listen to their views on pertinent local issues. Team managers state they feel very involved and empowered to contribute to and deliver on strategic priorities and are playing their parts in continuous improvement. Management information is used well and in the context of real time to set ambitious targets as well as monitoring actual performance and impact. Learning from internal audits and external inspections is good with examples of prompt action to deal with any identified service gaps. The recruitment of eight additional social workers following the unannounced inspection of contact, referral and assessment services in 2011 is a good example and of council responsiveness. Good use is being made across the partnership of models of best practice across the country and the partnership adopts an outward looking stance in respect of learning and sharing examples of its own best practice.
51. An innovative and nationally recognised approach to managing high risk adolescent behaviour is established in the county which is having a positive impact on reducing offending behaviours and in providing a wrap-around, responsive service for young people at risk of harm. There is a shared approach to risk management across the partnership and a committed and focused panel provide a responsive approach to changing risks or need. Gaps in service delivery are identified and there is a timely response to re-prioritisation of services as lines of strategic accountability are clear. For example, the creation of the missing children's social worker and the review of child sexual exploitation endorsed at NSCB level. Young people are also at the heart of managing risk alongside professionals. Many other local authorities place children and young people within Northumberland and the council alongside partner agencies give them equal priority. There are outstanding examples where the partnership has held other authorities to account for their plans to safeguard vulnerable children including leading cases where young people have been the subjects of sexual exploitation.

52. The council and partners demonstrate high ambition to increase opportunities for early intervention and prevention. Resources are used well to sustain and develop services with good examples of efficient working to achieve common objectives. For example the link between the fire service and local children's centres and the continued role of IROs beyond the first children in need plan to secure continuous services as a part of a step down approach.

Leadership and management

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

53. Leadership and management of safeguarding are outstanding. Managers at every level across the partnership demonstrate drive and commitment to keep children and young people safe and ensure joint services are focused on meeting assessed needs and risks. Service priorities are clearly defined within strategic plans and systems are embedded to routinely monitor outcomes and service effectiveness. Within the local authority there is strong corporate commitment to safeguarding and this is a priority for the corporate management team led by the Chief Executive. Political leaders champion the needs of vulnerable children and young people and, subject to a business case being appropriately developed, have provided additional resources to strengthen services or respond to increase service demands. The lead member for children and family services is knowledgeable in all aspects of provision and has a high profile in respect of contact with practitioners, teams and projects. The various boards and strategic groups, including NSCB and FACT operate well and maintain a healthy challenge in terms of the delivery of good quality services across the partnership. The voluntary and community sector plays an active part in the development and delivery of a range of services in the county and this contributes significantly to the overall effectiveness of leadership and management.
54. Leaders have set ambitious targets and expectations for individual and corporate performance. There are good and some outstanding examples of joint working at strategic and individual case levels and effective use of 'team around the child' approaches in schools, children's centres and family support services. Contact, referral and assessment pathways and thresholds in respect of safeguarding, including within health services, are clearly defined and overseen by competent and committed managers. Escalation processes are in place and used appropriately to raise professional concerns about individual cases. Financial control, budget setting and monitoring processes are all robust.
55. Joint workforce planning and development are outstanding. The workforce is stable and morale is good. The use of agency staff is kept to a minimum and when required is only arranged through a consistent approach with selected agencies. Work is allocated according to need and the qualification and experience of staff involved. Staff in Children's Services,

and across the partnership as a whole, receive regular supervision which is consistently recorded. Staff report they have good opportunities to discuss their cases in detail with their supervisors although reflective supervision is not always recorded in a way that demonstrates the depth of these discussions. Staff across the partnership consistently report being well supported by their managers and being part of a key service with clear strategic aims and objectives. Professional development opportunities are very good and based on continuous improvement and learning, including from serious case reviews and national issues. Safe recruitment processes are robust and well organised. Focused attention is given to staff absence through sickness, capability and performance assessment. Action is appropriately and sensitively taken where staffing concerns are identified. Newly qualified staff have protected workloads, are well supported by their managers and have access to a wide range of good quality training.

56. Ongoing learning and staff development are seen as a priority for the partnership with clear commitment to invest in staff to maintain a capable and stable workforce. There is a focused approach to learning that reflects corporate and strategic direction and collaborative learning approaches are well prioritised and a strong commitment to improving outcomes for children, young people and their families through effective workforce development. There has been a significant impact to the lives of children and young people through training programmes relating to the 'signs of safety' framework and resilience and attachment training and these have improved the focus of assessments and direct work with children and families and user engagement. The council are developing a range of learning mechanisms and further developing technologies to enhance learning. There is very good investment and support for newly qualified social workers and other front line staff and in supporting social workers in their continuous development. Partnership staff are motivated and this is adding considerable value to their work and to supporting vulnerable children, young people and their families. There are good examples of effective service commissioning including joint commission. A sub-group of FACT has been established to take forward new commissioning approaches and to harness opportunities for local initiatives in the context of prevention and early intervention. Processes for service procurement are robust and ensure that safeguarding expectations and service quality are clearly defined and closely monitored.

Performance management and quality assurance

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

57. Performance management and quality assurance are outstanding. The Children and Young People's Plan 2011 – 2014 is based on a comprehensive analysis of need across the county with a significant contribution of views from service users. Safeguarding priorities are clearly stated and are underpinned by ambitious targets which are closely

monitored. FACT, NSCB and local partnerships have access to a quality improvement framework for safeguarding and there is ownership of performance management across the partnership as whole including at practitioner level. This approach is having a highly effective impact on the quality of practice and outcomes. Quality assurance and performance reports are routinely made available to facilitate scrutiny by council committees, boards and local partnerships. Monthly reports are provided to front line managers and their staff and there is a healthy culture of understanding about the importance of performance management and quality assurance.

58. Internal scrutiny of performance is outstanding, with strong evidence of managers being held to account for service quality and performance and the actions to be taken in order to meet local and county-wide performance targets. Similarly, political leaders and senior managers have up to date data on performance trends and service quality and this enhances their accountability and capacity to act swiftly to deal with any perceived service deficiencies or gaps. The self-evaluation produced by the partnership for this inspection demonstrates the confident use of performance information to illustrate the impact and outcomes safeguarding provision in the county.
59. The performance of regulated services in respect of safeguarding is at least good with some examples of outstanding practice. The thrust of management action is towards achieving outstanding outcomes and there are good examples of organisational learning through the use of performance information and quality assurance processes. Services are responsive to the needs of minority groups, based on good intelligence, service targeting and an effective use of resources. Joint case audits and thematic audit systems have been established to enable local managers to monitor work quality, the effectiveness of partnership working and the impact of planning. The trend in performance improvement is positive with clear examples of decisive action taken following internal scrutiny or external inspections. The partnership adopts an outward looking stance in respect of performance and routinely measures performance against other areas. Weekly briefings are produced with regards the timeliness of assessments through the performance management team and effective case auditing which has impacted on the quality of assessments. The partnership audited a range of randomly selected cases for this inspection using current performance and auditing systems. This was a thorough and accurate exercise and reinforced the effectiveness of the current performance management and quality assurance arrangements.

Partnership working

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

60. Partnership working is outstanding. NSCB is effective and adaptable in keeping pace with a safeguarding agenda. The board is operating from a strong and well-established base including effective scrutiny, appropriate

challenge and focus on relevant issues. Priorities are in line with the Children and Young People's plan and there is a strong focus on high risk households and particularly vulnerable groups. The independent chair of the board is experienced in the role and in ensuring work parameters are clearly defined such as the annual reporting and streamlining of the sub-groups to ensure the effective and efficient use of partnership time and resources. The NSCB is well informed about the key issues for children's services and safeguarding and robust arrangements are in place for sharing management information. A learning culture exists and the board demonstrates the use of some imaginative methods to ensure that lessons from management reviews are widely disseminated. There are positive and productive relationships between the chair of NSCB, elected members and senior officers where professional challenge is mutually respected and used to identify performance and partnership issues. The links with the Child Death Overview Panel are established and training has been delivered to raise understanding of responsibilities. For example, good work has been undertaken to explore suicides amongst young people leading to new service developments. Membership of the board is appropriate with the exception of Cafcass. Membership is being extended to include lay members and consideration is being given how best to involve members of faith communities. There is effective joint working across children's and adult services in respect of safeguarding.

61. NSCB sub-groups are providing effective challenge to the board to drive the continuous improvement of safeguarding in the county. This includes a proactive approach to safeguarding children in schools across the county in relation to e-safety. This has had marked impact on complementing the accessibility of information for the police, identifying adults in schools who may be accessing networking sites and ensuring a county-wide approach to raising awareness amongst children, young people, parents and professionals. There is good evidence of effective multi-agency work including partnership with voluntary and community sector organisations. Responses to children and young people who go missing from home or care and very good awareness of risks associated with sexual exploitation. Work undertaken by 'street safe' is ensuring a timely and proportionate response to young people misusing alcohol. The Children's Support Team is providing focused and effective one to one work with families to prevent children coming into care. The fire service is outstanding in respect of contacts with families and commitment to safeguarding. Schools have appropriately prioritised safeguarding and staff are knowledgeable about the needs of children and families. The co-location of services is promoting very effective support for families including children with disabilities. This joined-up approach involves a wide range of professionals and specialist workers with good links to children's centres. Schools are increasingly using CAF and team around the child approaches.
62. A highly innovative and nationally recognised approach to managing high risk adolescent is established and impacting positively on reducing

offending behaviours and in providing a wrap around, responsive service for young people. There is a shared approach to risk management across the partnership and a committed and focused panel oversees changing risks and needs. Gaps in service delivery are identified and there is effective re-prioritisation of service when required. This is aided by clear lines of strategic accountability. There is outstanding practice in relation to ensuring that other authorities are held to account when children and young people are placed within Northumberland. Social workers are co-working cases facilitating good quality cross-authority communication.

63. Effective arrangements are in place to manage identified risks through strong partnership working. There is 100% attendance at MAPPA meetings and the operational framework is established. Timely intervention are made with an identifiable shift towards earlier joint action. This is exemplified by lower numbers of cases being managed at high levels and an increase being held at level one. Practitioners indicate this shift is being achieved through increasing professional confidence and strength in partnership working. The views of children and young people are well considered with good attention paid to the best venues for interviews and meetings to ensure children and young people feel comfortable. The commitment to safeguarding and child protection by the police is clearly evident in the strong communication arrangements in place with children's social care and health services. A risk assessment approach to screening has been agreed and further joint training is planned in April between the police and children's service to facilitate discussions the threshold for lower level domestic violence referrals and contacts and potential for diversion to support services such as CAF. There is evidence that growing confidence in the use of CAF is enabling cases to be managed in different ways. However, it is also acknowledged that there is further scope to extend the role of lead professionals to reduce the need for direct referral of lower level cases to children's social care. Awareness and understanding of private fostering across the partnership and identification of issues for consideration by the LADO is variable.

Services for looked after children

Overall effectiveness

Grade 2 (Good)

64. The overall effectiveness of services for looked after children, young people and care leavers is good. Outcomes in respect of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving and economic well-being are all good and making a positive contribution outstanding. The local authority and partners have high ambition for looked after children and young people which is reflected through effective corporate parenting arrangements, the priorities of FACT and NSCB and the consistently good track record in providing good quality care services, including to children and young people who are placed within the county by other local authorities.

65. Management and leadership are outstanding and ensuring that services are responsive to the different needs of children and young people across a large and diverse county. There is a good understanding and awareness of the looked after children population with increasing levels of engagement of service users in strategic and individual planning. The voluntary and community sector is active in a wide range of activity with looked after children and young people and care leavers. Strategic objectives for joint services are well understood across the workforce which is knowledgeable and supported well in delivering reliable and relevant services. Staff are well motivated and committed to securing good quality services. Safe recruitment is seen as priority across the partnership and good practice and processes are firmly embedded.
66. The quality of provision for looked after children and young people is good overall with some clear examples of outstanding services, including the targeted adolescent service. Shifts are being made in the range of services to support children and young people within their own families with good examples of effective interventions and joined up working. Where children enter the looked after children system planning is conducted within permanency principles and progress in achieving better adoption outcomes is being made. Regulated services are rated good, with the exception of one children's home, and some have outstanding features. A major change programme has been implemented in respect of the identified children's home which has an inadequate rating. Senior managers have ensured there has been a complete revision of the aims and objectives and amended the management structure. The quality of assessments, case planning and recording are consistently good across the county with evidence that children and young people are contributing regularly to their plans. Parallel planning is established where cases are before the courts and different options are under consideration in terms of long term placements. The role of IROs is effective and they are ensuring that reviews are conducted to a good standard and are timely. However, capacity in respect of this function is stretched at times and this has reduced opportunities for direct work with children, young people, parents and carers prior to some review meetings. Services to children and young people with disabilities are good and parents indicate a generally high level of satisfaction with the services provided. Transition planning for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities starts early, is well managed and ensuring good continuity of care. Fostering services were judged as satisfactory in 2009 and are currently the subject of a modernisation programme to increase capacity within the county and to ensure the changing needs of children and young people who enter care are being suitably met.
67. A wide range of health services are available to support looked after children and young people and care leavers including those placed out of the county. However, there have been no formal audits of the quality of initial health assessments or health plans. Children and young people who

are looked after are kept safe and indicate through surveys and other means that they feel safe. Very careful attention is given to placement options and commissioning is well organised. There is good evidence that advocacy services are made available to help children and young people to have a voice although surveys indicate that not all children and young people know about them or complaints systems. The role of the LADO is firmly established. Educational outcomes for looked after children and young people are good and the virtual school is well established. However, the influence of the virtual school post 16 is less strong and planning to help young people remain on academic or vocational pathways is not consistently focused. A wide range of services are available to enable looked after children to make a positive contribution and levels of offending are reducing and are good compared to similar areas.

Capacity for improvement

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

68. Capacity for improvement is outstanding. The council and its partners have high ambition for joint services and the promotion of the welfare of all looked after children and young people. The very effective working of FACT, local children's partnerships and corporate parenting initiatives are ensuring that ambitious targets for services are being met and sustained. Looked after children and young people are increasingly involved in shaping services through well organised events, conferences and surveys. There is a good track record of continuous improvement evidenced through trends in key indicators and inspection findings. Prompt and decisive action is taken in respect of issues identified through self-audit or inspection.
69. Workforce planning and development is robust and is ensuring the partnership as a whole has capacity to deliver effective and good quality services. Capacity has been increased in key areas to enhance quality or to respond to changing needs and demands. Financial support for children's services has been secured with additional investment in key services. Improvements to outcomes are firmly linked to improvements in service quality. Examples of this are the changes made to improve contact, referral and assessment processes, and the outstanding work in schools to promote the inclusion of all children and young people, including those who become looked after. There is very good awareness of the needs of children and families across the county and sensitivity to a changing demographic profile.

Areas for improvement

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

Within three months:

- develop auditing arrangements to monitor the impact and outcomes of health assessments and services
- agree the final framework for the modernisation of fostering services and the specific targets to monitor the progress and impact of the implementation plan.

Within six months:

- ensure that planning for young people aged 16+ years is sufficiently well focused on sustaining academic and vocational pathways
- enhance the influence of the virtual school on the range and quality of services for young people aged 16+.

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

Being healthy

Grade 2 (Good)

71. Children and young people cared for by the Northumberland Local Authority have good health outcomes. Improved and effective processes are in place to ensure that children entering the care system receive timely and comprehensive initial assessments of their health needs by an appropriately qualified medical practitioner. Ongoing arrangements to review and monitor the health of children and young people who are looked after are good and timeliness of assessments is comparably good against similar areas and national performance. However, there have been no formal audits of the quality of initial health assessments or health plans and this is reducing the capacity of health services to demonstrate trends and improvements in health care over time. Children and young people are routinely asked where they would like their health reviews to take place and this is helping them to engage in the process and participate more fully in the review of their health needs. The health team contribution to the targeted adolescent service is a significant development.
72. The effective scrutiny of health reviews and progress against health action plans by the designated nurse for looked after children is ensuring that looked after children who are placed out of Northumberland receive appropriate levels of individualised health care and support. Health partners are engaged in the care planning for those children and young people who are placed in therapeutic placements with clear specifications in contracts about health provision and general services being purchased with good monitoring of contracts. Plans are in place to provide young people leaving care with complete healthcare summaries as part of a unified approach across children's services areas north of the Tyne. Current arrangements involve care leavers being invited to attend face to face interviews with the lead nurse who discusses their health care needs and provides guidance on how to register with a GP and dentist. The looked after children health team attend planning meetings for young people leaving care and health needs are well documented in pathway plans. Health visitor and school nurse attend looked after children reviews depending on the individuals health needs of the children or young people concerned.
73. The arrangements to support the emotional health and well-being of looked after children are good. The highly regarded and effective Attachment and Resilience Training Strategy provides a well structured framework for foster carers, education workers, social workers and residential care staff in working with children and young people and in promoting good mental health. This training has contributed well to

improving placement stability for children and young people in care. Strengths & Difficulties questionnaires are used effectively to identify and monitor the emotional health of children and young people while they are looked after by the local authority. The Health looked after children team is actively involved in training and supporting foster carers and residential care home staff in helping them to meet the health needs of children and young people in their care. Training is provided on subjects such as healthy eating, health promotion and communicating with young people on sensitive topics such as sex and relationships.

74. Young people who are looked after have good access to universal contraceptive, sexual health and substance misuse services and are able to access one to one support from the domiciliary service. Residential homes receive good support from the local Cash (contraceptive and sexual health advice service) and Sorted (Support for young people who misuse substances) through a regular programme of visits from named members of the teams who work closely and creatively with residential home staff and young people. There is local screening of all young people who live in a residential care to help identify any issues or concerns around the misuse of substances.

Staying safe

Grade 2 (Good)

75. Outcomes for staying safe are good. Feedback from looked after children and those receiving leaving care services confirms that almost all feel safe or very safe within their placements and immediate localities. They also indicate that they know how to seek help if needed and have someone with whom they can discuss any concerns. Social worker contact is highly regular and social workers see children and young people alone and seek their views on a range of matters including safeguarding. There are effective systems to manage assessed risks and ensure that children and young people are adequately protected in their placements. In this connection services are responsive to changing circumstances and needs. Surveys for this inspection highlight that most looked after children and young people feel they have positive relationships with their social workers and support workers and this is confirmed by inspectors following discussions with groups of looked after children and young people.
76. The authority is active within the north east region in developing effective contracting and purchasing arrangements for care placements. Robust arrangements are in place to monitor all placements including feedback from independent reviewing officers, social workers, children and young people themselves and their parents. The senior officer for services to looked after children personally visits children and young people placed in independent children homes and the contract compliance officer is fully briefed on the standards of all the settings where children are placed and the quality of the provision.

77. Partnership working in respect of safeguarding looked after children and young people is strong. This is being achieved as a result of a mainly stable work-force and high level of cooperation in order to meet a wide range of needs. The Risk Management Group and multi-agency agency placement portfolio group play significant parts in overseeing that children and young people stay safe. Outstanding arrangements are in place to monitor and work effectively with children and young people and their families who go missing from home, school or care. The sensitive and proactive nature of this work, conducted in partnership between children's social care staff and the police has significantly reduced the number of young people who have gone missing and ensured a clear link with other services including those dealing with potential sexual exploitation. In this connection there are very good examples of outstanding joint work to establish patterns of behaviour leading to the arrests of adults seeking to exploit children and young people placed within Northumberland by other local authorities. Schools are active in promoting the welfare of looked after children and young people and good arrangements are in place to deal with issues such as bullying.
78. Placement stability is good with performance on the two placement indicators being consistently better than comparator areas and national averages. In Northumberland in 2010/11 only 5% of children and young people looked after experienced three or more placements and 77% of children and young people looked after for more than 2.5 years had been in the same placement for two years. Residential provision provided by the council is judged good, some with outstanding features, with the exception of one home which was judged inadequate but now restructured. The adoption service is judged good and the fostering service was rated satisfactory in 2009 leading to the development of a comprehensive action plan. All the independent fostering agencies used by the authority are judged good or outstanding and most of the private children's homes where children and young people are placed are judged good. Where ratings change in the course of placements the local authority takes immediate steps to review the quality of services and safeguarding processes to ensure the placements remain viable. As a consequence of having a robust placement strategy, the large majority of Northumberland's looked after children and young people receive very high quality of care leading to good outcomes including staying safe. Although the foster placements provided by the council are of good quality there is recognition that the pool of carers is small and that the nature of fostering is evolving in light of changing demographic and local needs. In this connection the local authority is embarking on a timely modernisation programme in order to establish a high quality and more local service for the majority of the looked after children population including sibling groups and teenagers.
79. NSCB provides effective leadership in respect of services to looked after children and young people and the role of the LADO is firmly established

providing a sharp focus on the safety of looked after children and young people. There is good identification of complaints which may have safeguarding implications and the LADO is appropriately informed. Information sharing between services in respect of keeping looked after children and young people safe is effective. Advocacy services are available to looked after children and young people and the council funds 'viewpoint' to enable children and young people to express their views. This is supplemented by the work of 'Future Routes' and 'Voices Making Choices' group.

80. The role of IROs in monitoring care plans and reviewing cases is effective and ensures that any issues relating to the safety of looked after children and young people are addressed quickly. This service is actively seeking to improve levels of engagement and responds quickly when issues are raised by children and young people such as lack of visits from their social worker or insufficient communication between social worker and foster carers. Care leavers are supported well through the 'Moving On' project which is ensuring the provision of suitable accommodation and access to education, training or employment.

Enjoying and achieving

Grade 2 (Good)

81. Outcomes for enjoying and achieving are good. From low starting points in early years, children make good progress and results at key stage 2 match the national average for looked after children. At GCSE, results improved significantly in 2011 and were well above the national average for looked after children. The attainment gap between all young people in Northumberland and those looked after is closing at age 16. Raising aspirations and improving achievement are given high profile in strategic plans and a robust data set is developing to monitor achievement, including for looked after children placed out of Northumberland.
82. The virtual school is now well established and the ESLAC team is highly regarded by schools. The very large majority of children and young people are in a stable placement with foster carers and designated teachers having access to effective training to ensure well-targeted support for the young person at school. Professionals in the ESLAC team have an in-depth understanding of the needs of each young person, including those placed out of county. The rate of completion of personal education plans is high and they are mostly of good quality. Children and young people are involved fully in discussion about their plan and the targets set help them achieve realistic yet challenging goals. The personal education allowance is used effectively to provide relevant catch-up and support programmes such as one-to-one classroom support, GCSE revision sessions, loan of Information Technology software and targeted support for individual children at the Edzone in Ashington. This is registered as a public examination centre where young people can take their examination if they cannot do this in a mainstream school setting.

83. The large majority of looked after children and young people attend school regularly. Schools work well with attendance officers and the virtual school team to ensure that any concerns are quickly resolved. In 2009-10, persistent absence was higher than the national average. Issues were identified quickly, the attendance reward scheme had a positive impact and most recent figures show significant improvement with absence reduced from 6.6% to 4.9% in 2010-11 below the national figure of 5.5%. The sustained good attendance of a small number of young people, particularly across all children's homes, is uneven and requires further consolidation.
84. Children and young people's achievements are regularly celebrated. There is good access to a wide range of further learning, cultural and recreational activities such as swimming lessons, judo and dance sessions, free musical instrument hire and trips to places of cultural interest. Younger children enjoy the Letterbox scheme and the support from 'Show Racism the Red Card' is ensuring that children feel confident in joining in enrichment activities. Sports, creative and performing arts activities are successful in developing young people's confidence and sense of pride. The work of the 'Tech Max' group provide examples of excellent outcomes in photography and poetry.

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

85. Arrangements for looked after children and young people to make positive contributions are outstanding. The Children in Care Council 'Voices Making Choices' (VMC) is well structured and supported very effectively by the Engagement and Development team. Young people have excellent access to senior officers and elected members to ensure that VMC's influence is promoted and respected. The 'Promise' captures the aspirations of this group and is disseminated widely to the whole looked after children population through events and publications of high quality such as the regular VMC newsletter.
86. Young people who are looked after are able to challenge stereotypical views people might have of looked after children which demonstrates a confidence and resilience in respect of their personal situations and circumstances. They promote positive images of children in care in Northumberland taking part in a range of events such as Comic Relief, litter picking in Blyth and charity days. Creative use of information technology, media and arts extends the reach of the VMC council to a wider range of children, foster carers and staff. DVDs produced by young people are of high quality and contribute to improving services. For example, the 'My carer is Mint' DVD has been used for the training of new foster carers and has had significant impact. Active influence is achieved through numerous initiatives such as taking part in staff interviews,

influencing good practice in foster care and raising awareness of the importance of confidentiality using publicity items such as mouse mats and mugs.

87. Children and young people have good access to advocacy and most are clear about procedures to make a complaint or access their care files. Care leavers who met inspectors were very positive about the services they access and described how they are helped to succeed to live independently and develop their confidence. All were enthusiastic about producing materials to help younger children and avoid concerns they themselves might have encountered in the past such as through the animation DVD *'Too Many Changes'* explaining sensitively the impact numerous changes of social workers might have on their well-being.
88. Most looked after children have very positive attitudes and behave well. No looked after child has been permanently excluded from school since 2008 which demonstrates a significant commitment to effective planning, good service responsiveness to behavioural issues and the establishment of a range of quality support systems. Fixed-term exclusions are avoided at all cost and rates are below average. In 2010-11 fixed-term exclusions were higher than in the previous year but the 15 young people concerned were experiencing particular challenges and were engaged in suitable alternative provision. First-time offending is below average and has been reducing year on year, supported by a highly effective restorative justice approach. Northumberland's Targeted Adolescent Service (TAS) offers outstanding support and the risk management process has won national recognition as a model of best practice for keeping adolescents safe from significant harm and promoting positive outcomes.

Economic well-being

Grade 2 (Good)

89. Outcomes for economic well-being are good. Care leavers have access to affordable accommodation of consistent quality and in the right place for them. The local authority makes every effort to match accommodation to each young person's needs with effective joint working with housing services. The 'Moving On' and 'Staying Put' projects provide high quality, stable and secure housing. Young people are well prepared to live independently and planning for practical help is thorough. Young people seen by inspectors said that they receive helpful ongoing support when they leave care.
90. Pathway plans are of good quality overall although some lack clarity and detail on education achievement. The influence of the virtual school is not yet sufficiently strong post 16 and there is insufficient robust planning to ensure that young people on academic or vocational pathways stay on their chosen courses to successful completion. There are generous packages of financial support for young people who aspire to go to

university and the 'Choice Together' programme offered by Sunderland and Newcastle universities raises aspirations.

91. The proportion of care leavers not in education, employment or training has fluctuated over time because of low numbers overall. All care leavers are known to services and young people seen by inspectors were satisfied about the support, advice and guidance available to them. Opportunities for apprenticeships and training placements are available through business partnerships and formal apprenticeships or training opportunities are offered by the council. Personal advisers maintain contact with the small number of young people who are currently not in any form of employment or training to offer guidance and support. Transition planning for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities starts early and is well managed and ensuring good continuity of care.

Quality of provision

Grade 2 (Good)

92. The quality of provision for looked after children and young people is good. A wide range of targeted services are available across the county to support families at points of crisis and to reduce the risk of family breakdown. The children's support team work very effectively with families to prevent admission to care or with foster carers to prevent placement disruption and the targeted adolescent service provides a clear focus for timely interventions.
93. The success and impact of these services is demonstrated in the trend of reducing numbers of children and young people entering public care in the county and the current level of stability of the care population. Clear and agreed processes are established to determine whether a child or young person needs to be taken into care and this decision is routinely approved by senior managers. Statutory requirements are being met in respect of social worker visiting and reviews of arrangements to ensure looked after children and young people are safe and secure in their placements. Visiting frequency by social workers to looked after children and young people is closely monitored by independent reviewing officers at statutory reviews. All children and young people in care are allocated to suitably qualified social workers.
94. The looked after children commissioning and sufficiency strategies indicate that the council understands the needs of the looked after population and are responsive to changing needs through the development of new services, for example the partnership with a voluntary organisation for a new facility for children with autism and aim to create smaller care units within communities for looked after children and young people. Managers maintain good oversight of children in need, child protection and looked after plans to ensure appropriate services are in place and any escalation of services is required. This is shared by partner agencies who understand the management of risk and the range of ways in which this could be

managed. Until recently some children were placed with family members under written agreements but this has now been reviewed to ensure there is full compliance with relevant regulations and that family members are suitably assessed.

95. Plans effectively draw together a range of partner agencies to work with families to reduce risks and unnecessary admissions to care. The Public Law Outline process is used effectively to engage with parents where there are risks to children and this has contributed to fewer children and young people entering the care system. However, letters sent to parents vary in style and do not always use language which helpfully describes what parents need to do to bring about required change. The numbers of looked after children have been stable over the past five years and performance in respect of short and long term placement stability is good. All looked after children and young people have an allocated social worker and most have been able to retain their own social worker for sustained periods of time. Young people also value the support of other professionals including the participation and advocacy workers and staff in the children's centres.
96. Case recording is up to date and is systematic in format so stories of children and young people can be readily followed. However, the quality and use of formal chronologies is variable. The quality of assessments is consistently good across the county and there is evidence within files that the voices of children and young people are influencing the shape and direction of care plans, including recognition of needs arising from culture or religious faith. There is a continued use of assessments whilst a young person is accommodated and regular care team meetings to ensure that any planning drift is resolved quickly. There is a strong commitment across the partnership to achieving permanency for vulnerable children and young people and staff and managers have good awareness of the permanency framework. However, the current procedures for permanency planning do not provide detailed guidance on intervention strategies at different stages and how this will be monitored for any court purposes. Timeliness in adoption is good and improving and an action plan in place to make further improvements.
97. There is clear evidence of very good support and service from a range of multi-agency professionals to children with disabilities and their families. Good and creative transition arrangements for young people are in place for young people when they reach the age of 18 years with good early planning, from as early as 10 years old. Effective screening for autism is enabling health and social care are able to provide services at an earlier age. A range of good quality services are available for families, from permanent long term care, residential short breaks or foster care, day care and a range of activities through the 'Aim High' project.

98. Arrangements for reviews of looked after children and young people's cases are good and the majority of reviews take place within statutory timescales. Where a delay is necessary this is closely monitored. Children and young people confirm that most reviews are child-centred and they understand what is being discussed at their meetings. Children and young people are placed in external provision only after careful consideration and these arrangements are monitored well. The strategic aim is to develop more services in county to reduce the need to use external placements. The council shows strong commitment to existing placements and ensuring continuity of care in the best interests of the children and young people concerned.
99. The fostering service was judged satisfactory in 2009. Over the last 12 months work with North Tyneside has been underway to develop a joint service. However, this approach was felt not to be cost-effective and these plans have now been abandoned. It is recognised that the fostering service in the county, although currently meeting needs and demands at an adequate level, is in need of modernisation with the aim of increasing the level of carers to meet current placement demands and to reduce dependence on independent fostering agencies.

Ambition and prioritisation

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

100. The council and partners are outstanding in their shared ambition for looked after children and care leavers. This is fully reflected in strategic plans and the commitment shown by FACT, NSCB and other planning groups. Corporate parenting is given a high priority within the council and across the partnership as a whole with very good awareness of the needs of looked after children and young people and care leavers. The Corporate parenting panel comprising of cross-party elected members and senior officers is effectively chaired by the lead member for children's services and routinely involves looked after children and young people to help inform discussions and to ensure participation on relevant matters. The lead member is an active advocate for looked after children and young people and is a member of a wide range of groups, meets with 'Voices Making Choices', visits children's homes and chairs FACT. This is ensuring that ambition is effectively translated into action and that services are being monitored for quality and impact.
101. Corporate parenting is also given a high profile within the corporate management team of the council which demonstrates good awareness of all departments in promoting services to support good outcomes. The terms of reference for the corporate parenting panel are clearly defined and based on achieving high quality services for looked after children and young people. Good examples exist where the panel has challenged others on behalf of looked after children and young people. Panel members are suitably trained and supported in their role and CRB checked. Elected members demonstrate significant corporate and personal

commitment to looked after children and young people and to fulfilling their statutory duties in terms of visiting and monitoring care placements. They also maintain a well informed overview of children's health, educational achievement, safeguarding and opportunities to achieve through training, employment and learning. The panel receives regular performance information and is appropriately linked to scrutiny arrangements and other county committees to facilitate wider ownership and responsibility for continuously improving outcomes.

102. The looked after children and young people commissioning strategy is based on a good understanding of the children's population in the county. Joint commissioning is well established with some outstanding examples of service impact in respect of targeted adolescent services and the engagement of children and young people in making a positive contribution. Performance targets in respect of services are increasingly ambitious and the overall trend of performance is an improving one.

Leadership and management Grade 1 (Outstanding)

103. Leadership and management of joint services for looked after children and care leavers are outstanding. FACT and other strategic group are ensuring that services for looked after children and young people are prioritised across the partnership and resources are committed to meet assessed needs. Commissioning arrangements for placements are robust and ensure children and young people are only placed in suitable and safe environments. The county is active across the North East in developing cost effective and good quality placements to meet the diverse needs of children and young people who become looked after. Financial management is robust with an effective focus on value for money. Additional resources have been secured for children's services and have been protected despite the fact the council has had to make some recent difficult financial decisions. There are good examples of effective practice in safe recruitment, service commissioning, work in schools and joint work to reduce the impact of poverty. Outcomes for looked after children and young people including those from minority ethnic groups, are good overall and leaders have set a culture for continuous improvement and high expectation.
104. Workforce planning is effective leading to a well trained and stable workforce which is achieving good outcomes and is well supported by competent and committed managers at all levels. Arrangements for staff recruitment are robust. The commitment of the voluntary and community sector to services for looked after children and young people is strong with good examples of partnership working to meet local needs. Strategic plans are clear and up to date and focused on service improvement through effective leadership and resource provision. Where gaps in services are identified prompt and concerted action follows including the provision of new resources where a good business case is made. Political leadership is

strong with elected members demonstrating clear and practical commitment to looked after children and young people. The level of engagement of looked after children and young people in service provision is increasing with some outstanding examples including group work and participation in strategic planning. The self-assessment of services for looked after children and young people produced for this inspection demonstrates that the council and partners know themselves well, are aware of strengths and areas for development and take prompt action to deal with any service gaps or to respond to increased pressures and demands.

Performance management and quality assurance

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

105. Performance management and quality assurance are outstanding. The partnership, through FACT, provides clear direction on all aspects of services for looked after children and young people and utilises high quality performance information to monitor the targets and priorities set out in strategic plans. The frameworks for performance management and quality assurance are comprehensive and supported by highly knowledgeable performance managers and staff. There is very good awareness and ownership of performance approaches amongst front line staff and teams and awareness of factors which may affect outcomes for looked after children and young people.
106. Auditing arrangements are well established including case and themed audits. Decisive action is taken where performance is seen to be adversely affected. A wide range of performance and quality assurance information is collected in respect of looked after children services and used extensively to monitor progress against ambitious targets. Data relating to user involvement and perspectives, including service satisfaction, are routinely used to inform discussions on the quality and impact of services. Service users are also increasingly informing service developments with good examples where this has significantly contributed to strategic and individual planning. Looked after children cases are suitably allocated to trained staff and there is no unallocated work despite the size and complexity of the county. Staff working with looked after children and young people receive regular supervision and feel well supported by their managers.
107. Recommendations from inspections have been promptly acted upon and the partnership is active in learning from others and sharing its own good practice. Financial management is rigorous and costs are routinely monitored against service contracts and quality of provision. Good attention is paid to service sufficiency and solid plans are in place and being enacted to modernise aspects of services, to build capacity within the county and to make services relevant to local need.

Record of main findings:

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