

Inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services

London Borough of Lambeth

Inspection dates: 10 – 20 April 2012

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Age group: All

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About this inspection

1. The purpose of the inspection is to evaluate the contribution made by relevant services in the local area towards ensuring that children and young people are properly safeguarded and to determine the quality of service provision for looked after children and care leavers. The inspection team consisted of three of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), one additional inspector 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 118 children and young people receiving services, 232 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 67 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 October 2010
 - interviews and focus groups with front line professionals, managers and senior staff from NHS Lambeth, Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, Kings College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLAM).

The inspection judgements and what they mean

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

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

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

Service information

4. London Borough of Lambeth is an inner city London borough. There are 59,389 children and young people under the age of 19 years, which constitutes 21% of the total population. Some 58% of the population is from a minority ethnic background.
5. The child population is diverse with 58% of children and young people belonging to minority ethnic communities compared with 37.3% of the general population of the borough. A significant number of children and young people are from refugee and asylum seeking families. Black African pupils formed the largest ethnic group in Lambeth with 24%, followed by Black Caribbean at 17.7% and White British at 15.1%. There is a growing Portuguese community with the percentage of Portuguese pupils growing from 4.6% in 2001 to 5.6% in 2011. There are 135 languages spoken in Lambeth schools.
6. Lambeth is ranked the 8th most deprived borough in London and 14th most deprived in England. Lambeth is placed 10th amongst London Local Authorities with the highest number of children and young people in poverty, and 15th in the UK. In Lambeth 35.7% (18,615) of children and young people aged below 17 years live in families claiming out of work or in work benefits, compared with 24% nationally.
7. The borough maintains 80 schools which includes five nursery schools; 58 primary schools, nine secondary schools, five special schools and three alternative education provisions (AEP). There are also seven academies in the borough (three primary schools and four secondary phase). Of the 32,942 pupils educated in Lambeth, 98.3% of children who attend Lambeth nursery schools are Lambeth residents, compared to 92.7% of primary pupils, 76% of secondary pupils, 85.2% of special pupils and 94.9% of pupils who attend Lambeth AEP. Lambeth's network of 27 children's centres and three satellite sites provides borough-wide coverage for under fives and families for integrated childcare, health and family support services, mainly on school sites. Four children's centres are provided by the voluntary sector.
8. The partnership arrangements of children's services in London Borough of Lambeth are overseen by the Children's Trust Board which was established in 2004. The London Borough of Lambeth Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is independently chaired and brings together all the main agencies working with children, young people and their families to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

9. Children and young people's services (CYPS) are delivered from two centres: International House in Brixton and Hopton House in Streatham. Social care services include a designated referral and assessment service, including referral and assessment teams, two hospital social work teams, an emergency duty team and an early intervention social work team. Lambeth is in the process of establishing a multi-agency safeguarding hub to improve its screening and assessment of referrals. The family support and child protection service includes family support and child protection teams, private fostering, family group conferencing services and multi-agency rapid response team. The children with disabilities service is also located within social care. The looked after children service includes looked after children teams, a court team, a virtual school and virtual health team, fostering service, adoption service, access to resources team, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) team, unaccompanied minors team, and there is a separate leaving care service. Social care also includes a universal safeguarding team, corporate parenting and service development team, LSCB and quality assurance service and a safeguarding and children looked after independent reviewing service. A commissioning team is also included within social care, including joint commissioning posts with health.
10. At the time of the inspection, 495 children and young people were being looked after by the local authority. They comprise 97 children under five years of age, 322 children of school age (5-16) and 76 post-16 young people. There were 250 care leavers (18-24). At the time of the inspection there were 307 children subject to child protection plans, of whom 184 are age unborn to 11 years. The local authority currently has 102 fostering households, including kinship and short break foster carers. Residential care is provided through individually commissioned provider services with 46 children currently placed in residential provision.
11. Health services in London Borough of Lambeth are commissioned by NHS Lambeth, community provider services are delivered by Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. The acute trust commissioned to provide services for children is Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and Kings College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. Emergency care and children's services are provided at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust. CAMHS and adult mental health services are commissioned from South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust.

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. Their ambition and prioritisation is translated well into excellent plans which are based on thorough needs assessments and meaningful community consultation. Issues of equality and diversity are addressed very well at both a strategic and operational level. The Children's Trust is highly effective in driving forward an ambitious agenda through the Children and Young People's Plan. Strong links with the Health and Well-being Board and the Local Strategic Partnership ensure that the services to children and young people are a priority for both the council and its partners. The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) fulfils its statutory duties and acts as an effective scrutiniser of safeguarding practice across the partnership. The voluntary and community sectors are recognised as key partners in the future of children's services and they feel valued in their role.
13. Lambeth is a council where staff are proud to work and staff turn-over is low. Despite significant reductions in the budget, front line services have been protected and there are sufficient numbers of qualified and experienced staff. The workforce properly reflects the community that it serves and recruitment processes ensure safe recruitment of staff. Training and support is excellent and managers, at all levels, are visible and approachable. The council and its partners ensure that its services are improved through learning, and messages from the analysis of complaints, multi-agency audits and learning from serious cases reviews are disseminated well. However supervision in the children and young people's service, although regular and easily accessible, is not always recorded effectively. This does not directly impact on the services to children and young people. Not all health services have sufficient staff trained to the appropriate level in safeguarding, but this is being addressed and should be remedied in the near future.
14. Performance management is robust and targets are ambitious. Strategic partnerships consider their efficacy through robust performance frameworks. These are translated well into effective systems at an operational level. Services are regularly reviewed, using both external and peer reviews to ensure that they remain 'fit for purpose' and resources are deployed effectively. Unannounced inspections of contact, referral and assessment services in the borough in 2009 and 2010 showed that the services were operating well with no priority actions. Where deficits were highlighted following the youth offending service (YOS) inspection in November 2011, the council responded in a quick and transparent way to address shortfalls in performance.

15. Partnership work is outstanding and it is implicit within all the work of the borough, leading to demonstrable improvements in outcomes for children and young people. The contribution of health agencies to safeguarding children and young people is good. Complex strategic priorities, for example the impact of the corporate priority to improve employment opportunities across the borough is well addressed for young people by highly effective working across the council, with partners and with the community. The key priority of the borough to reduce serious youth crime is addressed by a multi-faceted strategy. A range of interventions are appropriately targeted on preventing children and young people becoming involved in gangs or being victims of gang violence, while also targeting those who are already involved in serious youth violence. Effective work with the community leaders' forum ensures the partnership can properly respond to the needs of the community.
16. Children and young people in Lambeth largely feel safe. Consultation with children and young people is comprehensive and their views are clearly represented in the planning processes. The partnership knows the risks to children and young people in Lambeth and a wide range of strategies are in place to address these. Generally risk is managed well. However, for the small group of vulnerable young people who are either at risk to themselves or other people, pathways for access to appropriate levels of assessment and support are not sufficiently clear. The contribution that housing could make to the safeguarding agenda is currently under-utilised.
17. The quality of work with children is good. Thresholds are well understood by partners and these are successful in ensuring that children, young people and their families are offered support commensurate with their needs. Early help is available through the well-established use of the common assessment framework (CAF) and the work of the multi-agency teams. Referrals to children and young people's service for those needing a higher level of support receive a timely response and assessments are clear and contain good analysis. Assessments, case planning and recording is generally good but the quality of child protection plans are variable and at times lack sufficient focus. Plans for children and young people who are involved in child in need processes are not sufficiently robust in some cases. A wide range of agencies offer targeted support through parenting programmes, mentoring, children's centres and the multi-agency rapid response team (MARRT). However, the provision of intensive home-based support for children from birth to school age is limited.

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

18. The capacity for improvement is outstanding. Strong leadership and a shared vision have resulted in a strong track record of improving services to ensure that they meet changing needs of the borough. Consultation with children and young people is integral within the partnership and is used effectively to shape priorities. The ability of the council and its partners to anticipate and plan for the future is excellent. The future operating model for the council as a 'co-operative council,' effectively recognises the changing economic climate and has resulted in a new commissioning model to better meet local need and maximise the benefits of using the community and voluntary partners. The partnership manages resources effectively and successfully uses financial opportunities from central government and other sources to improve the range of services available.
19. The quality of services is good. The partnership learns well from messages from research, outcomes from serious case reviews and from its own audits which results in improvements of services, for example in the development of the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) to improve the quality of response to referrals for support to children and young people. The use of external support and peer review ensures that services are appropriately focused on the priorities of the council.
20. In order to improve the quality of provision and services for safeguarding children and young people in the London Borough of Lambeth, the local authority and its partners should take the following action.

Within three months:

- review existing systems, to assess and support young people who are exhibiting risk either to themselves or to others, to ensure that they are clear and robust
- improve the consistency of child protection plans and ensure that contingency plans within them are specific and proportionate to the risks in the case
- strengthen the use and quality of social care children in need casework plans through clearer identification of measurable actions and outcomes.

Within six months:

- establish a process to improve the awareness of housing providers in the borough about their role in safeguarding the children who they accommodate

- increase the level of home-based intensive support available to vulnerable children from their birth until they reach school age
- ensure that the reasons children and young people go missing are analysed and reported to the LSCB
- Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust should continue innovations around increasing school nurse numbers and review the school nurse service to ensure priorities are met.
- Kings College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust to identify staff who need training in child protection and ensure appropriate training is provided

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 ensure that children are safe and feel safe is good. Representatives of schools' councils say that they feel very well prepared by school to understand how to be safe and stay safe. The children and young people name a range of opportunities, such as street safety, internet safety, health and well-being issues, for them to learn about levels of risks and how to avoid risk-taking behaviours. Children and young people who were seen as part of the inspection felt involved in decisions made about them and their views were considered. Responses to the Care4Me survey revealed that 95% of young people felt safe or fairly safe. All young people spoken to as part of the inspection were able to identify someone to whom they could approach to access help if they needed to.
22. The partnership is well aware of the safeguarding risks to children and young people in Lambeth. The LSCB is active in raising safeguarding awareness through the comprehensive use of clear safeguarding strategies, good quality information material, high quality training and public events. The recent appointment of a worker to work directly with the faith communities will augment on-going work with local communities. The key priority for both the council and young people in reducing serious youth violence is addressed by a comprehensive range of innovative initiatives which have been evaluated to ensure their effectiveness. For example a range of effective preventive work is undertaken in schools, including the successful 'Growing against Gangs' programme and the 'Young and Safe' programme.

23. A well coordinated system of support is in place to ensure the early identification of children and young people who are at risk of harm. Children and young people are very effectively safeguarded through the public protection desk which receives all notifications concerning children from the police service. The two hospital social work teams provide a robust and responsive dedicated service. New hospital staff receive appropriate training delivered by the social work team to provide information about the service and to increase awareness of safeguarding issues and procedures. A wide range of meetings with health professionals enable informed, timely and early interventions. Appropriate identification of female genital mutilation, trafficking and gang violence incidents ensures young people are protected through child protection procedures.
24. Links between the out-of-hours service and day time services are robust. Access to legal advice for out-of-hours workers is readily available. Good partnership working is demonstrated through the joint funding of the appropriate adult service by CYPS, adult mental health and the police. The out-of-hours service has access to an independent support service to help children and families in crisis until day time services are available to take appropriate action. Good planning in preparation for the Olympics has taken place to ensure that the out-of-hours service is appropriately resourced to manage any possible extra demand.
25. Children who go missing are a priority for the LSCB. Effective procedures are in place to find children and young people who go missing and to ensure their safety when they return. In some cases, the partnership has taken decisive action to ensure their safe return through the effective use of police powers and prudent use of court orders and, where it is unsafe for them to continue to live in the borough, placements are made away from the area. Data about the numbers of children who go missing is reported to the LSCB but further analysis about the reasons why children and young people go missing is not currently reviewed.
26. Multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) are appropriately established to consider and manage risks to children from serious offenders living in the borough. All assessments specifically address safeguarding risks that the offender may pose. However, the use of the MAPPA procedures to assess and manage young people who may pose a significant risk to the community is underdeveloped.
27. The screening and response to domestic abuse referrals is robust, supported by a designated domestic abuse specialist within the referral and assessment team. Referrals to the multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) work effectively and in a timely manner. A recent external audit confirmed that the system was working well. The 'Violence against Women and Girls' protocol is supported by commissioning of services that best meet the needs of the local community. For example, the Gaia centre, a specialist service commissioned for victims of domestic

abuse, has a worker specifically to support young women. Although a small number of young people are supported by the MARAC process, the pathways to access this service are not sufficiently robust and it is not clear whether all those who meet the criteria are referred appropriately.

28. Two multi-agency panels, one within the children and young people's service and a second in the YOS, support work with children and young people whose behaviour places them at risk to themselves. Staff expressed confidence in the panels in helping them manage these complex cases. However, the council is aware of the potential duplication of work and a review is currently under way to ensure that systems are robust.
29. Audits confirm that children are consulted as part of the assessment process about how safe they feel. Assessments seen by inspectors demonstrated that the views and feelings of children were central to the assessment process, with equality and diversity always being taken into account.
30. Processes to ensure safe recruitment meet requirements and systems are sound. The management and scrutiny of positive CRBs are thorough. All settings and schools inspected by Ofsted to date have been judged as adequately meeting safeguarding standards. The council maintains appropriate oversight of schools' safe recruitment processes through an annual returns mechanism. High quality free training about safer recruitment and allegations management is available to independent organisations.
31. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) role is well-established. Thresholds are clear and there are good links with the referral and assessment service. Police attend all complex strategy meetings. Quarterly reports about the range of work undertaken and outcomes of this work are submitted to the Divisional Director and annual reports are presented to the LSCB. A wide range of agencies access the services of the LADO and the levels of reporting by agencies are monitored and, where discrepancies are noted, action is taken, for example training has been offered to housing providers to understand the low numbers of referrals from them. Links have been strengthened with faith communities to develop more robust reporting mechanisms. There is effective information-sharing with the adult safeguarding board.
32. The Ofsted children's services assessment 2011 recognised that the council was closing the gap in attainment between vulnerable children and all children in Lambeth. The majority of child minders are judged to be good or outstanding in staying safe, although the actual percentage is below statistical neighbours and England as a whole. All children's centres, local authority maintained secondary and special schools, the pupil referral unit and the vast majority of primary schools were judged in August 2011

as being good or outstanding in staying safe. Both the council's fostering and adoption services are judged good or outstanding for staying safe. Half of the residential family centres are judged good or outstanding in staying safe and the majority of private children's homes are judged to be good or outstanding in the same judgement areas. However, no academies or city technology colleges are judged either good or outstanding for staying safe.

Quality of provision

Grade 2 (Good)

33. The quality of provision is good. Thresholds are well understood by all partners and are regularly reviewed by the LSCB. As a result, children and young people and their families receive levels of support that are commensurate with their needs. The use of the common assessment framework (CAF) is well-embedded to offer early help and a high number of professionals from a range of agencies complete CAFs to access appropriate services. The work of the multi-agency team (MAT) and the 'team around the child' meetings are used effectively to ensure that plans are effective to meet the assessed needs. A wide range of interventions are available to support families through children's centres and commissioned services. A wide range of parenting programmes, including some in community languages, is available across the borough. Effectively links are made between the MAT and the children and young people's service to either step down to lower levels of support or escalate cases where the assessed need requires more support.
34. The children's specialist services intake team provides a responsive service which effectively manages the high volume of contacts and referrals. Robust arrangements are in place to receive, process and make threshold decisions on all contacts and referrals. The team benefits from a designated schools liaison officer and two specialist workers for housing and domestic violence. Cases are allocated promptly to qualified social workers. Recording is up to date on all cases seen, with evidence of some very good, conscientious recording of child protection visits. Management oversight and direction is clear on all cases seen as part of the inspection.
35. Most assessments are completed within timescales and are appropriately informed by other professionals. This leads to good identification of the risk and protective factors. Past history is routinely taken into account and issues of diversity are thoroughly addressed as part of the assessment process. Where appropriate, children and young people are engaged well in assessments through social worker observations, activity focused interaction and direct conversations. Where there is communication impairment, skilful use is made of observing non-verbal cues and by seeking to understand the child through their actions and responses.
36. Almost all child protection conferences are held on time. Meetings are well attended by professionals and parents and, where appropriate, children

are encouraged and supported to attend. Where necessary, translators and interpreters are used well to help parents participate fully in the process. Decisions and recommendations are routinely sent out shortly after the conferences.

37. Child protection core groups are held regularly, appropriately attended and within required timescales. Good focus is given to progress made against the specified actions. However, in a small number of cases, notes of the core group meetings are not sent out to key professionals.
38. Case planning is routinely in place but the quality of plans is variable. Almost all child protection plans are properly supported by written agreements. Whilst contingency arrangements are evident within the majority of plans and also within written agreements, these are not always compatible, and in some cases, lack a clear focus and are not always proportionate to the plan. The quality of child in need plans is variable with many having insufficient focus on the planned outcomes for the plan and lacking clear timescales for the achievement of targets. However, the use of child in need conferences which include attendance by partners and parents provides a good reviewing mechanism for plans resulting in timely and well-targeted services to children and young people.
39. The quality of provision for vulnerable groups is good. Young carers benefit from a wide range of enjoyment and learning activities supported by access to transport provision. Good liaison is maintained with adult services to ensure respite is available for parents whilst young carers are away from the home. However, some young carers expressed the view that their schools were not aware of the impact of their caring responsibilities on their school life. The development of the short breaks provision for children with disabilities, building upon the successful Aiming High initiative, has resulted in a good range of local community provision being available on a universal basis without the need for referral to children and young people's services. The autistic and complex interventions team (ACITS) provides a valuable service to support parents of autistic children.

The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe

Grade 2 (Good)

40. The contribution of health agencies to keeping children and young people safe is good. Health services are committed to partnership working to ensure children and young people in Lambeth are safe. Governance arrangements within provider services to safeguard children are good. Health partners are represented at a senior level on the LSCB, the Child Death Overview Panel and the Children's Trust.
41. The systems in place for health providers to assure themselves that children and young people are safe are good. Appropriate training

programmes are readily available to staff and named and designated professionals in post to provide guidance, support and child protection supervision to health staff. Safe recruitment processes are in place. Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks are completed for all new staff in provider units. All health professionals in post prior to 2002 have had a CRB check and there is a process in place to renew CRB checks for staff every three years.

42. An appropriate percentage of health staff in most provider services have up to date child protection training relevant to their role. Ongoing training programmes are available to maintain this and to increase the number of staff trained in Level 3 child protection in one trust. Although there has not been any serious case reviews since 2007, child protection training includes learning from national and London serious case reviews that are relevant to health partners, for example improving the recording of actions more accurately in children's case notes. Staff who work with children with disabilities complete additional training regarding safeguarding.
43. A designated nurse and doctor are in post, which have clear roles and report sufficient time to carry out their role effectively. They facilitate meetings of named professionals across provider services, monitor training levels at provider services and provide training and support to health professionals.
44. Named staff for safeguarding have been appointed across the provider organisations and are providing good information, supervision and support to health staff. They have sufficient time to undertake their roles and have access to supervision and support. They also attend London and national forums for named professionals. There is a named GP who regularly communicates with other GP practices, sending quarterly bulletins of useful information regarding children's safeguarding. All practices have a safeguarding lead and electronic systems to identify if a child is on a child protection plan. GPs interviewed as part of the inspection report difficulty in attending child protection conferences due to short notice and timing of meetings but they provide reports when requested.
45. There are effective systems in place within South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust to identify if patients are parents. Good systems are in place for communication with maternity services ensuring that midwives and health professionals are aware of risks to children and are able to act promptly. Particular support is given to pregnant women when child protection decisions mean the baby will be taken away at birth. The Trust's policy that children are not admitted onto adult wards further contributes to their safety and well-being.
46. Acute hospital services are provided by Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and Kings College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. Both have dedicated paediatric accident and emergency departments with

effective systems to highlight children who are on a child protection plan or repeat attendees and inform GPs, health visitors, school nurses and social workers that a child has attended the department. The walk in clinic operated by Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust does not have a computerised or paper system to identify if a child attending is on a child protection plan. This issue has been raised with the LSCB and is being considered by them as an area for improvement. Staff do, however, ask parents if they have a social worker and all attendance is reported to the child's GP who would know if they are on a child protection plan.

47. There is high awareness by health providers of the safeguarding issues linked with domestic abuse. Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust has a specialist service for women and girls experiencing violence with referral pathways from maternity and sexual health services. Staff reported good links with social workers. Health visitors and school nurses receive police notifications following incidents of domestic violence and prioritise visits to vulnerable families.
48. The specialist youth services are in place at the acute hospital trusts to engage young people who attend following incidents of violence. Services offer good continued support after discharge and referral to other organisations, for example, the Young and Safe project. Front line health staff are aware of the referral process and spoke positively about the impact on young people. Evaluation of this service indicates a good rate of on-going engagement with this group of young people.
49. Services to meet the needs of children and young people who self harm are good. Appropriate protocols are in place for young people up to the age of 18 attending Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust and Kings College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust to be assessed by CAMHS staff.
50. Access to health support for families with children who have disabilities is provided at an early stage. Parents of children with disabilities reported receiving good support when their child was young although felt the services were less available as their child grew up. Joint visits are undertaken with children and young people's services to avoid duplication. Parents of children with disabilities reported mixed experiences with health services at the local hospitals with lack of consistency between hospitals and being expected to continually repeat information. Parents also felt the waiting for appointments at GP practices is generally too long. Parents felt well supported by some services, particularly at Mary Sheridan Centre for Child Health where appointments are well coordinated and their feedback on the provision is valued. Arrangements for transferring from children's to adult health services are effective.
51. An effective range of CAMHS are provided by South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. Waiting times for appointments vary according to

the risk and need of the child or young person. A range of specialist services are available to meet individual need. The AIM service, for example, which works with children and young people who display sexually harmful behaviour, offers both advice to carers and professionals and individual work.

52. Links with adult mental health services are strong and supported by the jointly appointed manager who promotes links between adult mental health and children and young people's services. As a result, transitions between child and adult mental health services are good and adult mental health workers have a clear understanding of the importance of safeguarding children as part of their work with their adult patients.
53. There are good arrangements in place to ensure child protection medical examinations are carried out quickly by appropriately trained staff. Medical examinations following allegations of sexual abuse are carried out at the local Haven facility within the first 72 hours.
54. Consistently good progress is being made towards reducing the high number of teenage conceptions in Lambeth with a reduction of 42% since 2003. Specialist services are in place for teenagers who are pregnant. Specialist midwives see young women during their pregnancy and after the birth, offer advice on contraception, immunisations and give a comprehensive handover to health visitors. Young parents reported receiving support about a range of issues including housing, contraception, breast feeding and immunisations. All young women aged under 16 when they become pregnant are routinely referred to children and young people's services for an assessment of their needs.
55. Health visitors nurses work effectively, supporting families as part of the common assessment framework giving examples of early intervention work to prevent children becoming subject to a child protection plan. School nurses reported prioritised caseloads, focusing on child protection and child in need cases. The Trust has a suitable recruitment programme but is experiencing difficulties recruiting school nurses.

Ambition and prioritisation

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

56. The ambition and prioritisation of services to safeguarding children and young people are outstanding. The council, elected members and partners have a shared vision and high aspirations for the borough which is delivered through a robust planning process. Key stakeholders are consulted in a meaningful way to ensure that the ambition and priorities of the council are relevant to the diverse community that it serves. The Children's Trust links effectively with the Health and Well-being Board and the Local Strategic Partnership to ensure that corporate planning prioritises the needs of children and young people. For example, innovative work has been undertaken to engage the business sector in offering work placements and apprenticeships as part of the corporate

priority to improvement employment opportunities in the borough. Service planning is robust, monitored well by the partnership and is adapted where the changing needs of the community dictate. Plans to address serious youth violence are, for example, refreshed annually to ensure that they respond to changing patterns. The council is highly effective in recognising, at an early stage, the impact of legislative changes and national reviews that may impact on services and makes timely plans to ensure that the borough is prepared for their impact. For example the council's change to be a 'co-operative council' is in direct response to the Localism Act 2011 and the need to make continued reductions in the council's budget whilst maintaining a high level of service.

57. Elected members are knowledgeable and committed to ensuring that the highest quality children's services are maintained in the borough and have obtained external funding for the borough to provide additional resources. The scrutiny function within the council offers a clear challenge and, where deficits are highlighted, the learning culture within the council ensures that these are addressed and lessons learnt. For example, following an unsatisfactory inspection of the youth offending service, timely and decisive action has been taken to improve the service and learn from the deficits in practice. The Lambeth Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), which is independently chaired, effectively scrutinises the safeguarding practice of the partnership and promotes learning through a comprehensive training programme and briefings to staff.
58. Strategic priorities are understood by staff at all levels who also feel that they can contribute directly to developments in services. A social work practice advisory group, made up of front line practitioners, is an established forum that gives direct feedback to senior managers about the impact of changes in policy and procedure. Staff interviewed for the inspection felt that they were consulted well about changes to the service and that their views were considered appropriately.

Leadership and management

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

59. Leadership and management of safeguarding are outstanding. The council knows its local community well and uses its knowledge and engagement with service users to target resources where they are most needed. It responds quickly to meet the needs of a highly mobile population. For example, parenting programmes are now offered in Portuguese to provide a service to a new and growing population in the borough. Good partnership work between health, the police and children and young people's service ensure that the changing risks to children and young people are highlighted and addressed by the partnership. For example, a training DVD has recently been produced to train staff about the risk of female genital mutilation to some young women in the community. Consideration has also been made of the impact of the forthcoming Olympics on the safety of children and young people in the borough and

contingency plans are in place to address this. The effective monitoring of strategic plans and performance data ensures that deficits in service delivery are addressed in a timely way.

60. Senior managers are visible and accessible to staff. Workforce planning and development are very well organised with good systems in place to ensure the safe recruitment of staff. As a result, vacancy levels are low and there is an increasingly stable and experienced workforce. Workloads are manageable. Staff have access to excellent training and development opportunities, through the LSCB and external specialists, with very good investment and support for newly qualified social workers. Temporary staff are used on a limited base and have the same developmental opportunities as permanent staff, including training and appraisals. Senior managers are visible, accessible to staff and well respected. Staff seen by inspectors felt valued and respected and they were proud to work for the council.
61. Resources are managed well and there is a clear emphasis on ensuring that services are cost effective and duplication is minimised. The council has sought to maximise the benefits of joint commissioning service with health through the appointment of a jointly funded post with children and young people's services. The council has sought to protect children's services from significant budget reductions. Despite this, budget pressures have led to a review of the services provided by the council and this has resulted in a re-configuration of some universal services and de-commissioning of others. However, front line services have been protected to ensure that the most vulnerable children are safeguarded effectively.
62. A wide range of commissioned and contracted services are used well to support front line services. They are subject to regular, robust contract monitoring and visit to services which include announced and unannounced visits to settings. The council's ambition to ensure improved outcomes are directly related to local need through increased accountability of service providers is demonstrated by their recent successful bid to introduce payments by results.
63. The level of engagement with stakeholders and service users is excellent and their views impact directly on the way that services are delivered. Good engagement and consultation with parents of children with disabilities informed the development and commissioning of the current short breaks provision. Service users actively take part in the commissioning evaluation processes. The parent advisory group (PAG) is a positive development arising from the short breaks engagement through which ongoing consultation takes place about service developments. Links with the community and voluntary sector are strong and their influence is clear in the planning and delivery of services.

64. The service learns well from complaints and most are resolved at the earliest stage. Lessons learnt are used as a tool to improve service delivery. For example, improvements in timescales for assessing foster carers, improvements to pathway plans and support at university and more effective respite provision for children with disabilities were generated from responses to complaints. Services users are routinely told how to complain but those seen by inspectors were not clear how to give positive feedback about the services that they received.

Performance management and quality assurance

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

65. Performance management and quality assurance is outstanding. The need to improve performance and the quality of services to children and young people is understood at all levels of the partnership. National performance targets are generally in line with comparators and show an overall trend of improvement. Local priorities, and associated targets, are ambitious and the Children and Young Person's Plan 2011-2014 offers an effective framework for monitoring these. Both the Children's Trust and the LSCB use performance data and quality assurance information effectively to review performance and address shortfalls in a timely manner. Improvements in the levels of young people not in education, employment or training have been achieved through concerted multi-agency work by the partners of the Children's Trust. The LSCB has a well-established system of thematic multi-agency audits which is rigorous and accurately assesses the contribution of agencies ensuring the welfare of children and young people. The learning from these audits is disseminated well through the partnership by briefings and formal changes and systemic issues are highlighted through reports to the LSCB and remedial action taken.
66. Within children and young people's services, managers at all levels undertake routine quality assurance of cases and learning from these is directly fed back to individual staff and collated into service-wide briefings to improve the quality of case work. Data is used well by senior managers to drive performance and ensure the effective deployment of resources. Regular performance clinics are held between senior and operational managers to ensure that any shortfalls in performance are addressed in a timely way. Audits by the partnership of random cases selected for this inspection were thorough and accurate.
67. The council and its partners make good use external scrutiny and peer review to ensure that the quality of services remains high and resources are properly deployed to meet the changing needs of the community. Interventions provided as part of the partnership priority of reducing serious youth violence have been externally validated to ensure that they make a positive impact. The role of the LSCB is currently being reviewed to ensure that it meets the requirements of the Munroe review of Child Protection 2011. Close working relationships between the partnership and

other London boroughs provides a good basis for sharing good practice across the city. Elected members interviewed as a part of the inspection were able to show how they used their role as peer reviewers in other authorities as a learning opportunity to improve services within Lambeth.

Partnership working

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

68. Partnership working is outstanding. Highly developed and mature partnership working at all levels has resulted in improved outcomes for children and young people. Joint commissioning with health, through a jointly appointed post, is well established and results in an effective use of resources. Working relationships with the police are excellent and allow effective and timely information-sharing. The imminent implementation of the MASH will further enhance the efficiency of the working arrangement, which is supported by clear information-sharing protocols to ensure that data protection issues are properly addressed.
69. The voluntary, community and faith groups are recognised as important partners in the borough. They are engaged well in the ambitious and challenging agenda to establish a cooperative council. Some pilot projects have been established through specific funding streams to allow residents of two estates in the borough to develop schemes to meet local need. Partnership work between elected members, partners and the community leaders' forum, following the riots in the summer of 2011, illustrated a high level of working relationship to protect the community and therefore keep children and young people safe.
70. The LSCB is well supported by the majority of partners and fulfils its statutory duties and has robust performance management systems that hold partners to account for their safeguarding duties. It communicates well with practitioners and the community through attractive and accessible newsletters. A recent innovation is a newsletter for young people called Teentlk which outlines ways young people can keep themselves safe, in an attractive and easily read document. A number of effective sub-committees drive improvements across the partnership and offers wide ranging training opportunities to staff from voluntary, statutory and community groups. An effective 'train the trainers' initiative has increased the number of people receiving first level of safeguarding training. This has been particularly effective in increasing the number of police personnel trained in safeguarding. The serious case review panel works well to assess whether cases referred to them met the criteria for a full serious case review. Although no cases have resulted in full reviews, internal reviews of cases where there have been cause for concern about the quality of practice have been undertaken and lessons learnt have resulted in changes in practice. The appointment of a worker to engage the faith communities in the safeguarding agenda is a strength which has developed very effective safeguarding awareness and practice.

Services for looked after children

Overall effectiveness

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

71. The overall effectiveness of services for looked after children, young people and care leavers is outstanding. An increased emphasis on providing services to children on the cusp of care and the increase in adoptions and Special Guardianship Orders (SGO) has effectively reduced this population of children and young people. The local authority and partners have high aspirations for children and young people who are looked after and this is reflected in the high quality services that it provides for them. Outcomes in respect of staying safe, making a positive contribution and economic well-being are all outstanding and being healthy and enjoying and achieving are good. Corporate planning is comprehensive and reflects well the views of looked after children and young people. The Corporate Parenting Board acts as an effective driver to improve services. Resources are managed well to ensure that there is a good balance between financial probity and the best needs of the child or young person. Visions of Success (VoS), which represents the children in care in Lambeth, is a forceful and effective group who ensure that the voice of children and young people is heard at the highest levels.
72. The quality of provision for looked after children and young people is outstanding. Workers and managers are skilled and know their children and young people well. They are highly motivated in ensuring that children and young people receive the best services to meet their needs and act as effective advocates in achieving this. Where placements are needed, these are undertaken well to ensure that they meet the individual needs of the child or young person. Assessments are comprehensive and planning for permanence is integral to the work of the service. The work of the specialist court team is excellent and has resulted in a considerable improvement of filing times in public law cases leading to timely completions of adoptions and SGO applications. Children and young people have confidence that their corporate parents will do the best for them. Services to children with disabilities and unaccompanied minors are a strength. The recent inspection of the adoption service is outstanding and the inspection of the fostering service in 2009 found services to be good. The majority of looked after children do well in education and strenuous efforts are made by the council and its partners to improve the employment and training opportunities in a difficult economic climate. The virtual school works well to ensure good outcomes for children in statutory education but has yet to extend its influence to monitor the progress of young people who are aged over 16. Access to health assessments and targeted services is comprehensive. Mental health support is readily available through a specialist Children Looked After Mental Health Service (CLAMHS), however, in some cases, actions from health plans are not

always taken forward in a timely manner and rates of immunisation are lower than comparators.

Capacity for improvement

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

73. Capacity for improvement is outstanding. The council and its partners are ambitious for the children and young people in its care and they work effectively together to promote this. Highly effective work through the Children's Trust, Corporate Parenting Panel and the VoS has led to some significant improvements in services to children and young people who are looked after. Resources are managed well and commissioning is robust. Performance information is used effectively and shows a strong track record of improvement in services. Where deficits are recognised, remedial action is prompt and effective. An increasingly stable workforce results in children and young people having fewer changes of social worker. The workforce is stable and experienced and workloads for social workers are appropriate and manageable.

Areas for improvement

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

Within three months:

- Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust should develop a system to ensure that the follow up of recommendations from health reviews are undertaken in a timely manner.

Within six months:

- extend the positive development and influence of the virtual school beyond the age of 16 to increase participation in high-quality education and training opportunities and raise the achievement of care leavers further
- Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust should take appropriate action to improve the rates of immunisation of children and young people who are looked after.

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

Being healthy

Grade 2 (Good)

75. The overall effectiveness of services for children and young people who are looked after is good. Senior managers are active members of strategic

partnerships, including the Corporate Parenting Board so that the health needs of looked after children remain a high priority. A comprehensive annual report is produced each year, which includes the priorities for the following year, which is agreed by the board of hospital trust and Corporate Parenting Panel.

76. A specialist multi-disciplinary team, provided by Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust, offers a comprehensive service through a wide range of professionals including the designated doctor for looked after children, specialist CAMHS workers for looked after children (CLAMHS) and a dedicated nurse and health advisor. The team works well to coordinate health provision for all children who are looked after, including those who are placed outside the borough. Initial health checks are generally completed within the designated timescales.
77. Almost all annual health assessments are completed each year. There is a good referral process for social workers to request these assessments. Children and young people are encouraged to participate and are given a choice of venue and which health professional conducts the assessment. Proper consideration is also given to cultural, religious and gender issues. However in some assessments seen, the weight and height of the child were not recorded nor reasons for this omission noted. Good arrangements are in place for children and young people placed outside the borough to have their annual health assessment undertaken by their own GP. A good quality assurance system is in place to review external health assessments ensuring that all children and young people placed outside the borough receive a good service to meet their particular needs. Care leavers seen were registered with a GP and aware of how to access the services and advice that they may need.
78. Strengths and difficulties questionnaires are completed by foster carers and children and young people before the looked after child review and used well to identify any concerns. Health plans are updated from the review and appropriate referrals made as a result. However, in some cases the referrals had not been suitably followed up, resulting in a delay in health provision for some children.
79. Most children and young people who are looked after say that they receive enough information about their health. The health team is active in finding new ways of engaging children and young people in health issues. Information sessions are organised around being healthy, substance misuse, sexual health and contraception. Following feedback from young people and to encourage take-up, the health team are developing a 'one stop shop' to provide all health services in one place.
80. Good systems are in place to 'fast track' looked after children to CLAMHS and looked after children are prioritised by health providers. Care leavers who require ongoing support from adult mental health, disability or health

teams have their needs clearly identified with good systems in place to share information with adult services in a timely manner.

81. The looked after children health team provides support and advice to foster carers and information to social workers about health needs and managing behaviour to prevent placement breakdown. Foster carers receive specific training about relevant health issues, services available locally and how to engage with young people including how to ask difficult questions. CLAMHS offer a 12 week specific training 'fostering changes' for foster carers which equips them to understand the health and emotional issues facing children and young people who are looked after.
82. Staff in the looked after health team reported good partnership work with children's social care and voluntary sector services to meet the needs of looked after children. Health staff report good training and support to carry out their roles.
83. The health outcomes for looked after children are generally better or the same as those in similar areas and better than national comparators. The rates of dental checks are high. However, the number of children who are up to date with their immunisations, although increasing, is still below national figures and statistical neighbours.

Staying safe

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

84. Outcomes for staying safe are outstanding. Almost all children who responded to the Care4Me Survey reported that they feel safe or very safe where they are living and can talk to someone if they are being harmed. Looked after young people who met inspectors generally felt safe in their home and school. Lambeth is responsive to young people's own suggestions on what can help them to be and feel safe. Members of VoS have been involved in raising awareness about e-safety, and contributed to training for foster carers and other key staff on recognising and offsetting risks associated with cyber-bullying. Tangible outcomes in response to surveys and direct consultations include a contact card with the mobile number of their social worker, carer and other key adults, and illustrated profiles of foster carers to help prepare children for introduction to new households.
85. Risk assessments for looked after children are well embedded. Information sharing between partners is effective. Good links with professionals from other disciplines, notably the co-located CLAMHS team, inform and strengthen the understanding of risk and how this can be managed. Foster carers who met inspectors demonstrated good understanding of their responsibilities for the children in their care. They were confident that their training had prepared them for their safeguarding role, and could give examples of how they had directly protected younger children and helped older ones develop inner resilience. Assessments of risk and need are comprehensive and well informed by partner agencies. These

result in decisive actions to protect children, placements which are carefully chosen, and care plans which are well focused and rigorously reviewed.

86. Securing safe placements for children is a priority for Lambeth. All children in foster or residential care are in settings judged good or outstanding by Ofsted at the point of placement. In cases where a judgement is lowered following an inspection by Ofsted there is appropriate and prompt review of the child's needs matched with close monitoring of the placement. Cases tracked included instances where exceptional measures such as wardship had been used to protect vulnerable individuals. Risks associated with gangs are well recognised and there is targeted use of preferred placements out of the area to minimise risk for those who are unsafe in the borough. Inspectors saw evidence of sustained high quality work with children whose behaviour meant they needed specialist placements, resulting in well planned interventions which were helping them manage their behaviour and keep them safe in the community.
87. An effective multi-agency policy is in place to reduce the risk of children going missing from care and ensure their safe return. Foster carers and residential providers are trained to be aware of the issues that may lead children or young people to abscond and social workers are notified promptly. When a looked after child or young person goes missing, a timely multi-agency strategy meeting is convened to share information that may lead to the location of the child. Risk assessments are undertaken on those children who persistently go missing to ensure that the police can make a prompt response to future notifications. All children who go missing are visited by their social worker on return and offered an interview to discuss the reasons why they went missing. Regular reports about the effectiveness of the policy are submitted to the corporate parenting panel. A recent audit of the compliance to the policy by social workers showed that social workers are using the procedures well.
88. The role of the LADO is firmly embedded as part of the service to keep looked after children safe. A recent workshop for managers and social workers in the children looked after services heightened their awareness of the importance of the role of the LADO.
89. A wide range of targeted services are available to support families at points of crisis and to reduce the risk of family breakdown. Family Group Conferences are used well to look for alternative options to public care. This ensures that when children and young people enter care when it is in their best interests.

Enjoying and Achieving

Grade 2 (good)

90. Outcomes for enjoying and achieving are good. From low starting points in early years, children make good progress in their primary schools and results at Key Stage 2 are above the national and London average for

looked after children, particular in English. The pre-school 'Wriggle and Roar' group set up to develop the communication skills of looked after children has had a positive impact on speech and language development. At GCSE, results have improved over time and in 2011 they were slightly above the national average for the proportion of looked after young people achieving five or more GCSE at grades A* to C. The attainment gap between all young people in Lambeth and those looked after is closing, although the number of young people achieving high grades in GCSE English and mathematics is still below statistical neighbours and national levels of attainment.

91. Raising aspirations and improving achievement are given a high profile in strategic plans. The virtual school, which tracks the educational progress of looked after children, is developing its effectiveness through productive links with professional staff in schools in and out of the borough. The virtual school team, which monitors the educational processes of looked after children and young people, has an in-depth understanding of their learning and welfare needs. However, the influence of the virtual school on monitoring and challenging achievement is not yet sufficiently extended post-16.
92. The very large majority of children and young people are in a stable placement with foster carers and this contributes to their good progress at school. The large majority of looked after children and young people surveyed feel that they get all the help they need in school. Designated teachers have access to effective training with support readily accessible through the virtual school team. The rate of completion of personal education plans is high and they are mostly of good quality. Children and young people are involved in discussion about their plans and the targets set help them achieve their goals. Additional financial support is used effectively to provide relevant catch-up and support programmes such as 1:1 classroom support and GCSE revision sessions. Targeted support is available for individual young people at the pupil referral unit where young people can take their examinations if they cannot do this in a mainstream school setting.
93. The large majority of looked after children attend school regularly. A detailed attendance policy clearly outlines the responsibilities of all personnel concerned with ensuring that all looked after children attend school. Education welfare officers and the virtual school team work well together to ensure that any concerns about absence are quickly resolved. Despite this, a small core group of young people are recorded as having 25 days or more absence from secondary schools and, as a result, overall absence had risen and was higher than average in the last reporting year.
94. Looked after children and young people's achievements are regularly celebrated. A very high proportion of young people take part in a wide range of further learning, cultural and recreational activities. Young

children enjoy the Letterbox Library scheme that encourages them to read and enjoy books and foster carers make good use of the free REAL leisure card taking children to soft play and swimming and encouraging older ones to use it themselves for the gym. The 'Reach for the Stars' celebration event, congratulation letters and good luck cards sent post and pre-examinations boost young people's commitment and sense of pride. The virtual school has its own anti-bullying policy to ensure that children feel confident in joining in enrichment activities. Creative and performing arts activities are successful in developing young people's confidence and social skills.

Making a positive contribution, including user engagement

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

95. Arrangements for looked after children to make positive contributions are outstanding. The Children in Care Council 'Visions of Success (VoS)' is well structured and supported very effectively by the Children's Rights Officer and the Corporate Parenting Board. All looked after children and young people have excellent access to senior officers and elected members to ensure that the influence of VoS is widely promoted and respected. Young people in VoS told inspectors that they were confident that their views are taken seriously and lead to change. The pledge, 'Our Pledge and Promises', captures the responsibilities of the Corporate Parenting Board well and is disseminated effectively to the whole looked after children population through events and child-friendly publications of high quality.
96. Young people promote positive images of children in care in Lambeth taking part in a range of initiatives such as the production of the DVD 'Our Life' directed by the young people themselves. It captures young people's hopes about how the adults who work with them will do their job and inform foster carers and social workers. Active influence is achieved through numerous initiatives such as taking part in staff interviews, influencing the quality of housing for care leavers and participating in budget discussions and decisions. The young people have been involved in high profile initiatives including the development and design of the award winning Get2Know website (www.g2k.org.uk), and attending Associate Parliamentary Group meetings at the Houses of Parliament. An exceptionally broad range of activities organised by VoS and the Corporate Parenting Team help young people in care get together, build self-esteem and develop resilience by making friends and making a difference.
97. Children and young people have good access to advocacy and responses to the few complaints are prompt and used to improve services further. A very high proportion of young people participate in their reviews. The independent reviewing officer (IRO) service is actively seeking to improve levels of engagement with younger children, aiming to improve practice such as by providing a better voice for younger children in their health

assessments reviews. Care leavers who met inspectors were very positive about the services they access and they described how they are helped to succeed to live independently and develop their confidence.

98. Most looked after children have very positive attitudes and behave well. No looked after child has been permanently excluded from school this academic year. Strenuous efforts are made to avoid fixed-term exclusions and suitable alternative provision is made so that young people continue their learning. In the last reporting year fixed-term exclusions were in line with national comparators. Fixed-term exclusions are monitored well and excluded young people are supported effectively by the behaviour service. First-time offending is reducing and policies are in place to ensure that children are not unnecessarily prosecuted for minor incidents while in placement. Partners have a good understanding of the population of young people who are at risk of offending and interventions are in place, including using specialist accommodation to keep them safe.

Economic well-being

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

99. Outcomes for economic well-being are outstanding. Care leavers have access to accommodation of consistent quality and in the right place for them. The 'What Happens Next' initiative is effective in preparing young people to live independently and planning for practical help is thorough. The local authority makes every effort to match accommodation to each young person's needs.
100. Young people seen by inspectors said that they receive helpful ongoing support when they leave care. Pathway plans are of good quality and young people are clear about their content. They said that they enjoy their direct contact with their personal adviser or social worker to discuss important matters and that contact can be made easily via phone or e-mail.
101. Expectations that all care leavers will achieve is very high. There is excellent support to access higher education and ensure that young people succeed. All higher education providers have designated staff liaising very effectively with the care leaving team and can provide generous packages of financial and mentoring support. A consistently high number of care leavers enter university with 23 young people graduating in 2011. There are many examples of outstanding achievement for unaccompanied minors. A range of opportunities for apprenticeships and training placements are available through business partnerships and opportunities offered by the council. Efforts are being made to involve City-based companies to raise aspirations through, for example, the buddy scheme for young people interested in economics and an apprenticeship scheme with an asset management company.
102. Transition planning for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities starts early and is well managed to ensure equity of access to

the leaving care service. A bespoke approach is taken to promote engagement of all young people regardless of their background or circumstance and liaison with adult services is good.

103. At a rate of 79%, the proportion of care leavers in education, employment or training at age 19 is considerably above the national average and is above statistical neighbours. 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. There are promising links developing with staff in Lambeth College to ensure that young people stay on their chosen courses to successful completion. Key projects, such as the Lambeth Rise, 'Steps2Success' and targeted youth services are good examples of intensive and successful initiatives used to re-engage young people.

Quality of provision

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

104. The quality of provision for looked after children and young people is outstanding. A wide range of services are appropriately targeted to ensure that children and young people are not necessarily accommodated. The multi-agency rapid response team (MARRT) provides intensive support to families and mentoring for parents is provided in partnership with Homestart. Timely and decisive action is taken to secure appropriate care for children who cannot safely remain with their birth parents. Lambeth has a strong commitment to promoting care in the extended family where possible for children who cannot live with their birth parents. Family group conferences are used extensively to consider alternative care arrangements, resulting in high and rising rates of children fostered by members of the extended family. Relatives who met inspectors and who are caring for children spoke highly of the quality of social work contact and interventions, and had been well supported when applying for permanency orders through the courts. Consequently there is good use of special guardianship orders to secure stability for children who do not need to remain in care.
105. Clear and well embedded processes are in place to ensure children enter or remain in care only when this is part of an agreed plan. Where children and young people are unable to live with their family, the access to resources team (ART) is effective in linking children to appropriate placements. The team makes sure that priority is given to the individual needs of children and young people when finding placements. The team has a good knowledge of provision available and uses specialist resources where these are needed.
106. Children who are in care benefit from focused support by professionals who know them well, communicate effectively and demonstrate commitment to ensure they have safe and stable placements. Practitioners from social care and partner agencies who met inspectors were clear

about the care plans for the children with whom they worked. They were resourceful, well informed and highly motivated to ensure that the best resources were obtained to ensure plans were fulfilled. Complex packages including extensive therapeutic support had been commissioned for some children, resulting in successful progress to help them remain in, or return to, the community.

107. Case files reflect consistently high quality work by practitioners who are skilled and well supported in observing and interacting with children and their families. Almost all children and young people seen as part of the inspection felt that they had a good and trusting relationship with their social worker. They are visited regularly and routinely seen on their own so that they can express any concerns. Workers interviewed had a strong child focus, were confident in drawing on research to inform care plans and on occasions had appropriately challenged court directions where these were not seen to be in the best interests of the child. Recording is timely and care plans are comprehensive and based on sound assessments which reflect good involvement with partner agencies and use of research. While social workers were aware of the histories of the children and young people with whom they worked, the quality of written chronologies is variable.
108. Children understand their care plans, and feel that their views were generally heard and they can influence decisions. Case records and minutes of reviews confirm that those who work with them, including independent reviewing officers, are skilled and resourceful in obtaining their views, including situations where children are disinclined to attend their meetings. Examples of excellent practice included use of locally developed 'talking mats', used well by social workers to help children express their views, and a communications passport for a young person with multiple disabilities including lack of speech.
109. Enabling children and young people to form trusting relationships with the adults in their lives is a priority for Lambeth. Independent reviewing officers are linked with each child and are increasingly able to build relationships by seeing them before and between their reviews. Sustaining placements is a priority and measures are in place to identify those which are vulnerable and secure support services to offset risk of breakdown, through a well-established permanency clinic. As a result, there is an improving rate of short and long term stability of placements. Care leavers who met inspectors valued the fact that they had been encouraged to keep in touch with their foster carers into adulthood. Young people have good access to external support through advocates and independent visitors.
110. Good quality legal advice and legal planning meetings are used well to consider both whether a child has met the threshold for care proceedings and whether alternatives should be considered. Where court intervention

to protect children is needed social workers are supported in producing and presenting high quality reports which receive positive feedback from the judiciary. Confident and focused work by the highly competent court team has improved previously low rates of completion of care proceedings to among the highest in London.

111. Careful matching and post adoption work results in well planned and supported placements, and there has been only one disruption in the past three years. This high quality work is reflected in the recent 'outstanding' judgement on the adoption service.
112. Services for care leavers are highly effective. A 'stay put' scheme is in place to allow young people to stay with their foster carers by converting the placement to supported lodgings. Young people who move away to attend university are also supported to return to their foster placement during the vacations. However, some care leavers seen as part of the inspection were not aware of this scheme. A comprehensive protocol is in place to address the needs of homeless 16 and 17 year olds and, as a result, they are properly assessed and their needs met. The provision of housing for care leavers is good and they are supported well in their journey to independence. A designated worker for care leavers in the children with disabilities team ensures that their needs are also properly met.
113. The council offers very good support and understanding of the needs of unaccompanied asylum seekers. Swift referral for detailed health assessments with good access to translators, advocacy, placements and education helps to prepare these young people for their future, and where necessary, helps them prepare for return to their country of origin.

Ambition and prioritisation

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

114. The council and partners are outstanding in their shared ambition for looked after children and care leavers. Strategic plans, including the Children Looked After Strategy (2012-2015), are comprehensive and effectively prioritises the needs of this group of children and young people. Their needs are well monitored through both the Childrens' Trust and the LSCB. The Corporate Parenting Panel is highly effective in scrutinising the quality of services provided and driving improvements. Appropriate membership ensures that it can undertake its role effectively and includes elected members, senior officers from the both council and partnership organisations and representatives from foster carers and the VoS. A good system of regular reports in key areas, for example regarding educational attainment levels of looked after children and young people, allows strategic priorities to be monitored well. The panel links effectively with other partnerships and each year reports to the full council, through a member of the VoS.

115. All new elected members receive training in corporate parenting as part of their induction and there is cross party support for the importance of this role. Elected members use their influence to ensure high levels of service are maintained, through effective work to minimise budget reductions to service and encourage high quality employment opportunities in local businesses, including arts and theatre groups and financial institutions. They are strong and visible champions, meeting regularly with VoS and other groups of young people. As a result, young people feel that their needs are met well, believing that 'Most of our issues have been sorted, are being sorted, or will be sorted.'
116. As part of its role as a corporate parent, the council has strongly supported the Steps2Success work placement scheme. This currently offers work placements to six young people. It has sponsored 40 paid and 30 volunteer placements over the past three years, and work is in hand to extend this further to include partner agencies. Young people who spoke with inspectors valued this and a range of other support services from the council which had helped them develop aspirations, do their best, and enter the college or university of their choice, and all were on course to achieve their goals.
117. The vision of high aspiration for looked after children and young people is shared by all staff across all agencies. Senior managers show strong leadership and have established a culture of analytical challenge to continually raise standards. As a result, they have built a united and highly motivated workforce for children in care who have high aspirations for the children with whom they work. Workers and managers report confidence in the current direction of travel for looked after children and young people in Lambeth.

Leadership and management

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

118. Leadership and management of services for looked after children and care leavers are outstanding. 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 and for housing for care leavers are robust and effective. Commissioners know the profile of Lambeth children well and they demonstrate determination to balance quality with cost. Unit costs for children placed with independent agencies have been managed down, and are now low compared to other London boroughs. The challenge of ensuring sufficient local placement choice for children is well understood. A determined recruitment strategy and improved focus on the assessment of relatives as carers has resulted in a net gain of 19 Lambeth fostering households in 2011/12, and numbers of children placed within 20 miles of home are increasing.

119. The service is aware of and is taking steps to meet gaps in provision, specifically for white carers for young children and specialist foster carers for adolescents presenting challenging behaviour. Although the majority of children are placed with independent fostering agencies, these placements are child-focused and are based on their best interests. Stringent quality assurance measures are in place to select and monitor these placements and only those with a good or outstanding Ofsted judgement at the time of placement are used. A strong commitment is shown in matching ethnicity and religious beliefs of children with their carers or prospective adoptive parents. Few children or young people live in residential placements, which is a strength.
120. Partnership arrangements work well at all levels to ensure that children and young people received the best possible services. Looked after children who are particularly vulnerable, due to multiple needs, benefit from a tripartite panel which draws expertise and resources from health, education and social care. Managers demonstrated high levels of knowledge and skill in developing care plans for these children, for example, in commissioning specialist individual and family therapy to enable a well planned return home for a young person who has been placed out of the area for some time. Partners work well in helping care leavers make the transition into adulthood. Effective working links are in place with adult mental health and community services to ensure transitions plans for young people with complex needs are effectively managed. Housing providers are well engaged in ensuring that care leavers have accommodation that meets that their need and appropriate support to help them into independence.
121. Workforce planning is effective and has led to a well trained, experienced and stable staff group. Newly qualified social workers valued the care taken to ensure their workload is tailored to their skills and experience, and felt well supported to develop as professionals. Caseloads are well matched to individual workers' skills and abilities and are generally manageable. Managers and staff at all levels felt well supported to take up training opportunities relevant to their work and are confident in their roles.
122. Outcomes for looked after children and young people, including those from minority ethnic groups, are good and improving in a range of key indicators. Placement stability is considerably better than national and statistical neighbours, educational attainment is improving, and in the majority of areas, is in line or better than national and statistical neighbours. High numbers of care leavers are in education, employment and training and the borough has one of the highest rates in the country of university attendance. The meaningful engagement of looked after children and young people is implicit in all planning and evaluation of services. Children and young people know how to complain and the

outcomes of complaints are collated and are used to inform service development.

Performance management and quality assurance

Grade 1 (Outstanding)

123. Performance management and quality assurance are outstanding. Performance targets are ambitious and outcomes are generally in line with, or exceed national and statistical neighbours. Improved long term placement stability is being achieved by increased oversight through the management structure and use of a specialist tool, developed in-house, which enables workers to identify and respond where there is a risk of placement breakdown. Rates show incremental improvement is now better than the national and statistical neighbours. A focus on increasing local placements has led to more children being placed within 20 miles of home, and while Lambeth rates are still higher than national averages, they are now lower than statistical neighbours.
124. Performance data and quality assurance are used well by managers and front line staff to improve performance and the services provided. Social workers receive a weekly briefing on performance of their team against key indicators and senior managers take part in a performance clinic to address shortfalls. Close scrutiny of performance has led to changes in practice to improve services for children and young people. For example, poor historic performance on rates of care leavers in suitable accommodation at 19 has led to a review of housing provision for care leavers which, in turn, has led to improvements in the the quality of accommodation available to care leavers.
125. Case files are regularly audited by managers at all levels to ensure the quality of services. Thematic reviews are also undertaken by senior managers and have included reviews of cases of children awaiting adoption and children who are missing from care. The LSCB also conducts multi-agency audits regarding the quality of services to looked after children and young people. The results of these audits are collated and dessiminated through strategic partnerships and briefings to staff to share the learning and improve services.

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	Outstanding
Services for looked after children	
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Capacity for improvement	Outstanding
How good are outcomes for looked after children and care leavers?	
Being healthy	Good
Staying safe	Outstanding
Enjoying and achieving	Good
Making a positive contribution, including user engagement	Outstanding
Economic well-being	Outstanding
Quality of provision	Outstanding
Ambition and prioritisation	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Performance management and quality assurance	Outstanding
Equality and diversity	Outstanding