

Cambridgeshire County Council

Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers

and

Review of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board¹

Inspection date: 3 June 2014 - 25 June 2014

Report published: 8 August 2014

The overall judgement is that children's services are <u>good</u>	
It is Ofsted's expectation that, as a minimum, all children and young people receive good help, care and protection.	
The judgements on areas of the service that contribute to overall effectiveness are:	
1. Children who need help and protection	Requires improvement
2. Children looked after and achieving permanence	Good
2.1 Adoption performance	Good
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Good
3. Leadership, management and governance	Good

The effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is **good**

The LSCB coordinates the activity of statutory partners and has mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of local arrangements.

¹ Ofsted produces this report under its power to combine reports in accordance with section 152 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This report includes the report of the inspection of local authority functions carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006 and the report of the review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board carried out under the Local Safeguarding Children Boards (Review) Regulations 2013.

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Section 1: the local authority - summary of findings

The local authority is good because:

1. Council leaders and senior managers have responded purposefully and systematically to the improvement agenda. Monthly improvement board meetings have ensured a sustained focus on improving practice quality and learning within the workforce and on developing effective multi-agency partnership arrangements.
2. The model of social work practice in Cambridgeshire provides opportunities for social workers and clinicians to work together to manage risk and share responsibility to achieve good outcomes for children and families. Social workers report feeling safe, secure and valued in an environment where good social work practice can flourish.
3. A quality assurance framework is establishing an effective and regular overview of case work with an increasing number of cases audited by the local authority graded as good. Inspectors agreed that significant improvements in social work practice could be seen in more recent case work. Where shortfalls are identified, workshops are used well to support the improvement programme.
4. The local authority recognises that there needs to be a continued focus on improvement to ensure that all children are appropriately safeguarded and the remaining variability and inconsistency in the quality of some case work is addressed.
5. A strong emphasis on direct work with children means that most children, young people and care leavers enjoy meaningful relationships with their social workers and personal advisers. Children and young people are seen and seen alone, and their wishes and feeling contribute significantly to their assessments and care planning arrangements.
6. Through Locality Teams and intensive, specialist family support programmes such as the Multi Systemic Therapy (MST) programme and the family intervention project, children and families are being helped at an early stage to reduce the need for statutory intervention.
7. The local authority has established a domestic abuse governance board in response to the prevalence of domestic abuse in the lives of children subject of child protection plans. Raising awareness across the partnership of the impact of domestic abuse on children and families has seen an increase in referrals and more families being helped.
8. Volunteers in Child Protection, a voluntary service commissioned by the local authority, provide a service to match volunteers to families with children on a child protection plan. They provide support and practical help and work with

families to build their confidence and resilience and reduce the need for long-term statutory intervention through the child protection process.

9. Strong corporate parenting arrangements with cross-party political support are manifested primarily through a well-constituted, multi-agency corporate parenting board which is performance driven and focuses on improving services and social work practice. Lead members and senior officers demonstrate a good knowledge of the needs of all children in Cambridgeshire. Their understanding is strengthened by the influence of an enthusiastic and energetic Children in Care Council.
10. The 'Just Us' group gives opportunities for all looked after children and care leavers to meet regularly and share their experiences. The participation teams coordinate a range of activities to support them and ensure that they lead healthy and well balanced lives.
11. A strong sense of urgency and purposeful work in achieving permanency for those children where a return home is not an option can be seen in the local authority's approach to securing positive and stable experiences for children and young people. A 'no detriment' policy to support foster carers continuing to provide long-term care to young people is having a beneficial impact and the number of children in staying put arrangements is rising.
12. Post-adoption support for adopters is effective and highly valued. Support plans are illustrative of the range and quality of the support provided by the local authority in ensuring placement stability for children is given high priority.

What does the local authority need to improve?

13. Ensure that statutory child protection guidance is followed on all strategy discussions and section 47 enquiries leading to a comprehensive assessment of risk and effective information sharing.
14. Ensure that child protection and child in need plans are specific and measurable, focus on key needs and risks and include robust contingency arrangements that are understood by parents as well as professionals.
15. Ensure that assessments analyse and focus on the child's individual experience and needs, in particular evidencing meaningful consideration of the child's religious, ethnic or cultural needs and how these are going to be addressed.
16. Ensure that when decisions are made to close a case, the decision is supported by a robust assessment and that any identified need has led to a direct offer of support.
17. Ensure that chronologies are consistently used to support assessments and enable social workers to recognise the cumulative impact of abuse on children, including the impact of neglect.
18. Consider advocacy for all children who attend child protection conferences, in order to better understand their experiences and ensure their wishes and feelings are reflected in child protection plans made for them.
19. Ensure that pathway planning has a greater focus on measurable, accountable and timely planning, concentrating particularly on engaging young people in education, employment and training where they are disengaged. Update pathway plans at least every six months.
20. Strengthen adherence to the protocol to ensure housing providers are working together with children's social care to support vulnerable young people when they present as homeless.
21. Ensure that social workers' skills and development needs are sufficiently explored and translated into individual professional development plans.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors looked closely at the experiences of children and young people who have needed or still need help and/or protection. This also includes children and young people who are looked after and young people who are leaving care and starting their lives as young adults.

Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children, young people and families. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with families and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition, inspectors considered what the local authority knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

The inspection of the local authority was carried out under section 136 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The review of the Local Safeguarding Children Board was carried out under section 15A of the Children Act 2004.

Ofsted produces this report of the inspection of local authority functions and the review of the local safeguarding children board under its power to combine reports in accordance with section 152 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

The inspection team consisted of seven of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted.

The inspection team

Lead inspector: Helen Cawston HMI.

Team inspectors: Tracey Metcalfe HMI, Steven Gauntley HMI, Adesua Osime HMI, Nick Stacey Contracted Inspector, Marianick Ellender-Gele HMI, Cathy Blair Seconded Inspector.

Information about this local authority area²

Children living in this area

- Approximately 127,680 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in Cambridgeshire. This is 21% of the total population in the area.
- Approximately 13% of the local authority's children are living in poverty.
- The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
 - in primary schools is 12% (the national average is 18%)
 - in secondary schools is 10% (the national average is 15%).
- Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 10% of all children living in the area, compared with 21% in the country as a whole.
- The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are Asian or Asian British and Mixed.
- The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:
 - in primary schools is 11% (the national average is 18 %)
 - in secondary schools is 8% (the national average is 14%).
- A large traveller and Eastern European population seeks seasonal work in the agricultural parts of the county.

Child protection in this area

- At 31 March 2014, 2,515 children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist children's service. This is a reduction from 2,631 at March 2013.
- At 31 March 2014, 395 children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan. This is an increase from 211 at March 2013.
- At 31 March 2014, 37 children lived in a privately arranged fostering placement. This is an increase from 28 at 31 March 2013.

Children looked after in this area

- At 31 March 2014, 501 children are being looked after by the local authority (a rate of 39.3 per 10,000 children). This is an increase from 465 (36.3 per 10,000 children) at 31 March 2013. Of this number:
 - 212 (or 42.3%) live outside the local authority area

² The local authority was given the opportunity to review this section of the report and has updated it with local unvalidated data where this was available.

- 56 live in residential children’s homes, of whom 51.7% live out of the authority area
 - 4 live in residential special schools³, of whom 100% live out of the authority area
 - 333 live with foster families, of whom 39.6% live out of the authority area
 - 12 live with parents, of whom 60% live out of the authority area
 - 3 children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- In the last 12 months:
- there have been 31 adoptions
 - 10 children became subjects of special guardianship orders
 - 212 children have ceased to be looked after, of whom 3.7% subsequently returned to be looked after
 - 31 children and young people have ceased to be looked after and moved on to independent living
 - 21 children and young people have ceased to be looked after and are now living in houses of multiple occupation.

Other Ofsted inspections

- The local authority operates 3 children’s homes. 2 were judged to be good or outstanding in their most recent Ofsted inspection.
- The previous inspection of Cambridgeshire’s arrangements for the protection of children was in September 2012. The local authority was judged to be inadequate.
- The previous inspection of Cambridgeshire’s services for looked after children was in September 2009. The local authority was judged to be adequate.

Other information about this area

- The Executive Director of Children, Families and Adult Services has been in post since July 2010.
- The chair of the LSCB has been in post since September 2009.

³ These are residential special schools that look after children for fewer than 295 days.

Inspection judgements about the local authority

The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection

Key Judgement	Judgement Grade
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires Improvement

22. The early help offer to children and young people in Cambridgeshire is effective and showing positive impact. However, there is still improvement required to ensure that services to children in need and those in need of protection are consistent and effective. Areas for improvement include strategy discussions and section 47 enquiries; the quality of child protection and child in need plans, assessments and chronologies.
23. The Enhanced and Preventative Services Directorate (EPS) coordinates and delivers a good range of support services for children and young people as soon as needs are identified. Fourteen multi-disciplinary locality teams, based around clusters of schools, are central to the success of prevention and early intervention programmes. Staff in schools and children’s centres know how and when to refer children and families for support and, if in doubt, help and advice are readily available from professionals based in the locality teams.
24. Locality Allocation and Review Meetings (LARMs) for children from 0 to 19, including those with a disability, are well established and enable effective sharing of local intelligence, including information from health and police partners. This ensures that children are helped from a very young age.
25. In the cases tracked by inspectors, robust support plans help improve the well-being of children and families, in particular their attendance at school, their health and their personal development. Inspectors observed well-chaired meetings leading to positive outcomes for children and young people living in households where parents have mental health or substance misuse problems or where, in a high number of cases, domestic abuse is a factor. When cases need to be escalated to children’s social care, prompt action is taken following this decision.
26. Early help assessments, through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), are focused on the needs of the child, taking into account the whole family’s context and levels of need. Parents who spoke to inspectors praised the staff for their knowledge and understanding. They said that the Family Intervention Programme (FIP), an intensive support programme for families with complex needs, and other parenting courses had helped them greatly to develop their resilience and confidence at times of crisis. The targeted approach to early help, including a multi-systemic therapy programme, is seeing more children helped earlier. The local authority has seen a decrease in the number of re-referrals from 20.6% in 2013 to 16.6% in April 2014, compared to the England

average of 24.9%. The local authority's approach to targeting early help is having a positive impact on changing entrenched patterns of behaviour in some families and reducing the need for longer term statutory intervention.

27. Child protection rates in Cambridgeshire have been significantly below that of other local authorities, but recent public awareness raising across the country about child protection and the outcome of some high profile serious case reviews has seen a recent and unprecedented increase in the number of child protection cases between July 2013 and March 2014 from 230 to over 380. A plan to increase targeted support to families is in place in order to reduce pressure on statutory services.
28. Where statutory intervention is required it is often prompt and effective, and in most cases is a short-term intervention when families are in crisis. There are low numbers of child protection plans lasting over 12 months which reflect the local authority's overarching aim of ensuring that children receive timely help and support and that they are not subjected to formal child protection interventions unnecessarily.
29. Improvement advisers challenge children's centres to focus their resources where they are most needed and ambitious targets are set for the involvement of vulnerable groups. Six children's centres provide specialist support for children with disabilities as well as the core early help offer. Parents using one of these centres told inspectors that staff provide excellent advice on the specific needs of their children.
30. Help for older children with additional health and behavioural needs is co-ordinated effectively through the locality teams. Young people who are known to use drugs or alcohol and those in treatment are supported well, with easy access to the Child and Adolescent Substance Use Service (CASUS). Through effective training opportunities, staff receive regular updates on 'legal highs' and other new substances to help inform their practice. In the past twelve months the number of young people in treatment, at 223, has reduced by 3%, waiting times for treatment are lower than national and exit figures at 89% of young people completing treatment are better than the national average of 79%.
31. A health-related behaviour survey undertaken in 2012 found that 25% of pupils in Years 8 and 10 reported feeling afraid to go to school at least 'sometimes' because of bullying. In response to this issue, the local authority has encouraged schools to use a self-assessment tool to review the effectiveness of their safeguarding practices and approaches to bullying, including cyber-bullying. The most recent data show that 87% of schools had completed this audit at the time of the inspection. Schools' advisers challenge schools where the audit has not been undertaken. The Personal, Social and Health Education team provides a range of support to schools, and surveys are conducted to check whether children and young people feel safe. The 'Together for Families'

programme is showing positive impact, with better attendance at school and reduction of both police calls-out and incidents of anti-social behaviour.

32. Thresholds for services are set through the Model of Stage Intervention (MOSI) framework and are well known and understood across all agencies. As a result, children's early help needs are identified quickly and practitioners respond with the right level of support at the earliest opportunity. Decisions taken to escalate to children's social care are informed by the threshold document.
33. Experienced and well trained staff provide an effective and timely response to contact requests, which are then passed to the Integrated Access Team (IAT), where all referrals are screened to ensure effective information sharing leading to a timely offer of assessment and help. Consent is sought where appropriate and is well evidenced in records. Social work expertise is available to professionals and families from the Multiagency Access and Referral Unit (MARU), which is staffed with partners from health, education and the police. Together, these staff provide specialist advice to professionals about actions to take when they identify safeguarding concerns for children.
34. Child protection enquiries are generally timely and are undertaken by experienced social workers with good management oversight. No examples were seen by inspectors where children and families were subject to unnecessary child protection investigations.
35. The majority of strategy discussions evidence the sharing of information between key partners but a small number of strategy meetings sampled involved the police and social care only, leading to decisions about investigations being made without full background information and the involvements of other significant partner agencies, in particular, health professionals.
36. Most records of strategy discussions are thorough, with good evidence of children concerned being seen and spoken to alone. Risks are usually fully explored and analysed, establishing a clear rationale for decisions being made. However, a small number of strategy discussions did not fully assess the risks and there were also some delays noted in the recording of outcomes of child protection enquiries. This hindered the provision for robust multi-agency planning and action, leaving children vulnerable to risk for longer than necessary.
37. Social work services are delivered through small Working for Families unit teams, each of which is led by a consultant social worker supported by two qualified social workers. This unit model has been developed to ensure a more systemic approach to assessing and planning for children and families. Social workers report that the reflective nature of the model has sharpened their practice, enabling them to achieve more timely interventions for children and families. Team clinicians bring fresh perspectives and challenge around interventions and methods of engaging families. This approach has

strengthened assessments and reduced the need to commission specialist assessments, particularly where care proceedings are being initiated.

38. The local authority has recently introduced the single assessment framework. Some assessments seen by inspectors were of a good quality, timely, comprehensive and proportionate to risk, with strong oversight by managers. However, some were seen to be overly long and descriptive, and a small number focused on siblings, losing sight of the individual child's needs and experiences.
39. Many assessments are informed by direct work with children, with good analysis of children's circumstances leading to clear recommendations about the type of support required to meet their needs. In many cases inspectors saw little consideration being given to race, religion, culture and language in many cases assessments. However, some good examples of children's cultural needs being addressed well were noted. Chronologies that record significant events in a child's life are not being routinely used to inform assessment and planning. In a small number of cases seen, inspectors saw cases being closed without sufficient analysis or consideration to family history and presenting risk, leaving some children vulnerable.
40. Case records in most cases are up to date and reflect managerial decision making and oversight of case work. Weekly unit case discussion meetings demonstrate good levels of reflective practice and challenge with effective monitoring of outcomes. However, this is not routinely captured in recording and assessments.
41. Social workers form positive relationships with children and use creative approaches to better understand the child's experience. Resourceful use of iPads helps social workers to identify the wishes and feelings of children and young people and their families through a range of on-line games and activities, including the three houses and the happiness scale. Direct work with children is generally captured well in case records.
42. Statutory visits to see children are regular; children are seen and seen alone with evidence in case recording of their experiences, wishes and feelings. The majority of recordings are detailed and analytical with good attention to progress made against the plan, followed by clear actions.
43. Children with disabilities are appropriately identified and safeguarded. Social workers recognise the importance of using imaginative communication methods when interacting with disabled children. As a result, disabled children and children who have communication difficulties develop meaningful relationships with their social workers. Those who are subject to a plan are supported and protected well by the children with disabilities units.
44. Significant improvements have been made in the timeliness of child protection conferences, with 100% now being held within the required timescales.

Chairing of conferences is good and children are placed firmly at their centre, with a strong emphasis on their ongoing needs. Insightful use of the 'strengthening families based approach' promotes reflective consideration of risk, progress made and outcomes achieved. The enthusiastic approach to conferences facilitates the successful engagement and participation of professionals and parents', helping to ensure that initial planning is effective. One parent reported that the support offered to him had been excellent and improved his parenting and relationship with his child.

45. Conference reports provided by social workers and professionals are generally of a good quality and are usually shared with parents well in advance of the conference. Core groups take place regularly, with good attendance and engagement from professionals and parents. Parents who spoke with inspectors understood the reasons why their children were subject to local authority interventions and understood the changes that they needed to make to improve outcomes.
46. Advocacy for children is not always considered, although when it is used the child's experiences, wishes and feelings are better understood and reflected in planning. The use of advocacy is increasing and, in the three months prior to the inspection, 196 children were actively supported by the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). The service's annual report demonstrates a significant increase in the past year from 246 to 330 children either supported by an advocate to attend, or to have their views represented at conference.
47. The quality of ongoing planning is inconsistent in both child protection and children in need cases. This variability means that not all plans for children are sufficiently specific, achievable and with measurable goals. Some plans seen by inspectors lack focus on risk and the timely completion of agreed tasks. In these cases, it is difficult to see how the parent and child know what needs to change and how they will be supported to make the changes necessary.
48. Family group meetings are well established and are used effectively to explore extended family involvement for children subject to the PLO. Authoritative action is usually taken when help and protection provided for children do not achieve the desired outcomes or when concerns escalate.
49. Social workers appropriately escalate cases to Children's Allocation Meetings (CAM), where threshold discussions and higher level interventions such as Public Law Outline (PLO) and care proceedings are considered and agreed. However, the recording and tracking of decisions made at CAM need to be reviewed. Inspectors saw evidence of delay in actions being progressed and of decisions changed following the CAM meeting.
50. The emergency duty team (EDT) is colocated with MARU. There is good communication between EDT and daytime colleagues, leading to effective transferring of information. However, the local authority acknowledges that there is insufficient capacity within the team to meet demand. This means that,

at times of pressure, additional resources have to be secured at short notice. This undermines the quality and consistency of practice.

51. The private fostering plan for the forthcoming year identifies a range of issues to be addressed but the vulnerability of privately fostered children is recognised by the local authority as a priority. There were 37 ongoing private fostering arrangements at 31 March 2014. The authority accepts that this is likely to be an under-representation and it has recently introduced an action plan to raise awareness of private fostering across the county, with advertisements in the local press. The authority has also worked with local language schools to raise awareness, resulting in a significant increase in the number of notifications from the sector. Private fostering arrangements have been strengthened by a dedicated post.
52. 307 families who experience high risk domestic violence are well served by effective Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC). These are well established, with good representation and input from partner agencies. Effective information sharing and well-coordinated actions and interventions ensure that risk is robustly managed for children in these families.
53. 224 children missing or at risk of missing education are closely monitored through the locality teams. Officers across the fourteen localities liaise closely with schools, health professionals and the police and are active in raising awareness of children missing from education. This includes training for staff in independent schools. When a child is reported as missing education, officers swiftly contact a range of organisations, such as previous schools, siblings' education settings, RAF bases, border control and the traveller community, to ensure information is shared and missing children are found quickly.
54. 482 pupils are known to be home educated. Of these, 377 are actively engaged with the local authority and provision has been assessed as suitable. When potential risks are identified, education welfare officers' conduct a home visit. However, in two cases sampled, where children were home educated and on a child protection plan, they were not receiving a suitable education. The local authority recognises the need to develop the relationships with families who refuse a visit, so that all children are properly safeguarded.
55. There are 344 children and young people waiting to receive a CAMHS service. In response to this service gap, the Children's Trust has influenced commissioners across the partnership to review provision and put additional services in place to address the shortfall, including the commissioning of a counselling charity, Centre 33.
56. Arrangements for monitoring and safeguarding children and young people at risk of being missing from home or care and vulnerable to child sexual exploitation (CSE) are robust. In April 2014, 17 children were reported missing, accounting for 39 instances. The local authority is working with this group of children and young people to reduce the risk they pose to themselves.

57. Comprehensive strategies and protocols, alongside a strengthened data set, have facilitated a better understanding of any potential activity in the county that may place children and young people at risk. All referrals about children missing are progressed by IAT, which undertakes return interviews within 72 hours for children who are not looked after. Children who go missing from care have a return home interview conducted by an independent voluntary agency. Interviews are well recorded and address issues of safety and vulnerability.
58. Intelligence gained from return interviews is shared with police, helping to identify any patterns and trends in activity, known cohorts of children and young people at risk and hot spots of activity. The targeting of support and resources in this way has led to a number of police arrests and convictions of adults who posed a risk to missing young people at risk. Cambridgeshire's comprehensive protocol for the identification and risk assessment of CSE cases has been implemented across the multi-agency safeguarding network, with 231 members of staff across the agencies trained and made aware of its use. This led to 56 CSE cases being referred to MARU between December 2013 and March 2014, using the agreed risk assessment tool.
59. The local authority designated officer (LADO) role is well embedded. Effective reporting and investigative processes are in place to respond to allegations of abuse, mistreatment or poor practice by professionals and carers. Case examples seen show timely responses to enquiries, with good multi-agency attendance at strategy meetings ensuring that information is shared appropriately and effective and coordinated action is taken.

The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence

Key Judgement	Judgement Grade
The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence	Good

60. Decisions to look after children and young people are supported by robust threshold assessments and ratified by multi-disciplinary Children's Allocation Meetings (CAM) chaired by the Principal Social Worker. This ensures that these decisions are in children's best interests and that all other options have been thoroughly explored. The panel also determines the type of placement children need. In emergency cases, the Head of Service approves decisions with an equally rigorous process.
61. The numbers of children becoming looked after is reducing. Improvement can be seen in the application of thresholds for access to children's social care and the delivery of early help and prevention services. Significant attention has been given to the development of effective support services for children and young people on the edge of care. Clinicians within social work units engage creatively, flexibly and intensively with families to understand them better and reduce the need for care wherever possible. Family Group Meetings (FGM) are used effectively to explore support and strengths within families and, as part of parallel planning processes, to secure the right outcomes for children. This means that only those children who need to become looked after do so.
62. Where return home is considered, senior management and independent reviewing officers scrutinise care planning arrangements. Plans are unhurried, child focused and carefully thought through and children's wishes and feelings are considered. Robust assessments evidence parents' capacity to sustain change, and additional support from unit clinicians helps to ensure that children can stay safely at home and the risk of a return to care is minimised.
63. When children and young people need protection through the courts, the public law outline is used effectively. All pre-proceedings work is considered by the CAM panel. When the threshold is met for application to court, the panel ratifies the decision. Letters before proceedings are well written and set out clear expectations of parents and carers, together with stringent timescales for change to be achieved. Support provided in these cases is well evidenced. However, this process could be further strengthened with better tracking of applications that meet the threshold to progress to court, to avoid any drift and delay if children's situations deteriorate further.
64. Positive relationships with Cafcass and the courts have helped ensure more timely permanence planning for children and young people. The average length of care proceedings has reduced significantly, and Cafcass reports that applications are appropriate and that sustained improvement in the quality of

assessments and reports have gained the confidence of the court and reduced the need for independent expert assessments.

65. Well trained staff work effectively together with foster carers and professionals to progress children's plans for permanence. Family group meetings are used effectively to explore extended family members and connected persons when thinking about long-term options for children of all ages. This means that children who cannot remain with their parents are given the best possible chance to live permanently with a family member or someone they know well. Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) are increasingly being used with packages of practical and financial support provided, although the authority recognises that there is further work to do to fully embed special guardianship as a permanency option for children and young people.
66. Contact arrangements, including where contact between children and significant family members has to be supervised, are carefully assessed and supported. Direct work with children and young people by unit clinicians help them to understand the reasons for their separation from family and friends who are important to them, and where brothers and sisters have a different plan to them. Children are seen regularly by social workers who know them well. Statutory visits to children meet requirements and in some cases social workers visit more often. Case records show that children are seen and seen alone and the purpose of visits is clear. Not all recording is up to date and there is some variation in recording across the units supporting looked after children. Management oversight is clearly recorded on children's files. Unit meeting notes very effectively record case discussions with managers and unit clinicians which explore the success of interventions and next steps.
67. Good arrangements are in place to maintain and improve the health of looked after children and young people. Unit clinicians work closely with health partners to assess and respond to children and young people's emotional well-being needs. Clinicians contribute significantly to single assessments and provide direct therapeutic responses to children who have emerging or low level needs. Where more intensive support is required the clinicians' input and the quality of their assessments expedites referrals in to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).
68. The needs of looked after disabled children are met through high quality placements, with good social work support provided by three specialist children with disability units. Individual workers are skilled at communicating effectively with children who are non-verbal. There are good transitional arrangements with adult services, with examples seen of their involvement with some children and young people from the age of 14. The authority is currently working with parents and providers to increase the range of placement options closer to home for children with complex needs who are currently cared for outside the county.

69. Educational outcomes for looked after children are improving, although more improvement is required in some areas. In 2013, based on a small cohort of 23 pupils, the proportion making the expected progress in reading at key stage 2, at 78%, was slightly above the most recently reported national figure for looked after children. However, only 54% of pupils made the expected progress in writing and 65% in mathematics, lower than national averages.
70. Key stage 4 results are improving more quickly. The proportion of looked after children achieving five good GCSEs has risen from 22% in 2011 to 39% in 2013, above the national figure of 36%, but only 16% achieved five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. The attainment gap between students who are looked after and their peers is not narrowing because these improvements have not kept pace with the rising trend for all students in Cambridgeshire.
71. Ten children (almost a third) of looked after children in key stage 4 have a statement of special educational needs; six pupils are educated in special schools; 16 are not accessing GCSEs or equivalent qualifications. While 18 pupils are currently in satisfactory alternative provision, almost all are receiving the minimum requirement of 25 hours of education each week.
72. Most looked after children attend good schools (70%). Careful planning by social workers supported by a team of Education Support for Looked after Children (ESLAC) teachers mean that changes of school are only made when they are in children's interests. Of the 108 children who experienced a change of care placement last year, only thirteen had to move school and four of these were from the same family. One looked after pupil was permanently excluded from a primary school in October 2013 before moving to a special school. Six looked after pupils are in the County School, a pupil referral unit judged good at its last inspection. As of October 2013, 83% of looked after children who left year 11 last summer were in education or training. The proportion of Cambridgeshire's care leavers at 19 years of age who are engaged in education, employment or training has been consistently below that of its statistical neighbours throughout 2013, although Cambridgeshire's latest figures in April 2014 show a significant improvement at 71.4% (a small cohort of seven care leavers). Officers recognise that there is more to do to sustain the participation of young people post-16. Eleven young people are currently in higher education.
73. Staff in schools are overwhelmingly positive about the support provided by the ESLAC team, especially when pupils are transferring from primary to secondary schools. Every looked after child, including those placed out of county, has a named link ESLAC teacher who knows them well. The pupil premium funding is now managed centrally and schools are challenged to demonstrate their impact on raising achievement. Most children's personal education plans (PEPs) show how this funding is used, for example to provide one-to-one tuition, but the difference this is making to children's progress is not always clearly recorded. Good practice is developing in supporting very young looked after children in

early years settings. The ESLAC service also provides support to adopted children, young people and their families. Performance is reported to a management board and to the corporate parenting panel, ensuring effective oversight of children's achievement.

74. Arrangements for finding families for children who are unable to return home safely from care are effective. A dedicated looked after children's permanency unit focuses specifically on securing permanent family placements within children's timescales and on family finding for large sibling groups. Five concurrency placements have been achieved so far, with the children involved benefiting from decisions to secure their futures being taken without delay; the longest care proceedings in these cases took just 17 weeks.
75. Children looked after by the authority benefit from stable placements. The authority makes significant use of private residential care providers and independent fostering agencies, despite the overall number of looked after children reducing. 67% of all looked after children live with foster carers. 10% live in residential children's home. Most children are living in provision that is judged to be good or better. Where the Ofsted judgement changes at an inspection and is less than good, robust action is taken by the social worker and commissioning officers to satisfy them that the placement remains appropriate for the child. They establish with the provider an action plan to address the shortfalls identified. Recognising the limited choice of in-house placements available, particularly for older children for whom adoption is not an option, the authority is taking effective action to recruit additional foster carers. Robust safeguarding checks are undertaken and formal supervision is satisfactory but not always frequent. Foster carers from independent agencies receive the same good quality support and scrutiny as in-house carers, and they speak very positively about the high quality training and support provided from the fostering service.
76. Foster carers are very committed to the local authority and to the children and young people they care for. They are passionate about improving outcomes and strengthening the attachments they have to the children they care for. They are well supported by family placement workers. Formal supervision of foster carers is of a satisfactory quality but does not always take place regularly.
77. 205 (42%) of looked after children are placed out of county or at a distance of more than 20 miles from their family home, with 35% placed in specialist residential provision. Whilst effective work is currently being undertaken with providers to identify new provision in-county, monitoring visits by the commissioning team and regular visits by their social workers ensure that children and young people placed outside the county are safe and well cared for. Two young people living in children's homes outside the county were visited during the inspection. Both placements were of high quality and staff were well supported by skilled social workers who know the children well. One young person told inspectors that his social worker was the best he had ever

had and that she really cared about him. 23 children are matched to an independent visitor provided through the National Youth Advisory Service to ensure that they have independent support and that their views are considered.

78. All looked after children and young people have a care plan which is robustly reviewed by independent reviewing officers. Permanence is considered early and is high on their scrutiny agenda. Care plans are consistently clear about achieving permanency arrangements as soon as is possible. With this in mind, senior managers track plans through monthly monitoring meetings, taking decisive action where children are waiting too long to be matched with permanent carers. The added value of unit clinicians supporting assessments can be seen in improving care plans, helping social workers to focus on key areas of children's lives and experiences. More work needs to be done to ensure that children's diverse needs are explicitly stated and addressed. Also, the format of care plans could be improved to make them easier for younger children to understand.
79. Looked after reviews are timely and there is increasing evidence of independent reviewing officers seeing children before their reviews, to ensure that their views are taken into account. Children and families benefit from interpreting and translation services to ensure that they understand and feel able to participate in discussions and meetings that affect them. Independent reviewing officers have strong links with social work units and dispute resolution processes are well embedded. A protocol with Cafcass to transfer cases back to independent reviewing officers after final court hearings helps to prevent drift and sustain progress made in the course of proceedings.
80. All looked after children and care leavers are provided with a secure password to the Children in Care Council section within the Youthoria website, which has information to help them understand their entitlements and how to complain. The website also provides good information to help children and young people protect themselves from all forms of bullying. Social workers, foster carers and residential staff have been specifically trained to help children and young people use the site and understand how to access any support they need. The authority commissions the National Youth Advisory Service to provide an advocacy and independent visitor service for children and young people. This assures them of independent support should they wish to make a complaint.
81. The council values the Children in Care Council highly. Children and young people in the 'Voices Matter' and 'Just Us' groups routinely influence the shape of services, helping to improve outcomes for children across the county. They are regularly involved in recruiting staff and in training social workers and foster carers. These groups are highly effective in influencing change across the council. Looked after children, young people and care leavers told inspectors that their wishes and feelings are taken seriously by the adults who care for them and they consider that senior managers and leaders are genuinely interested in their experiences. Dedicated participation officers support young people to be inspired through strong links with further education colleges and

Cambridge University, which are developing a range of vocational courses and learning opportunities. The children in care council has been instrumental in the development of the Youthoria website which provides information to looked after children and care leavers about their entitlements, social events and how to access support.

82. The young people have recently won a British Film Institute award for making a film called 'Finding My Way', to support care leavers making the transition from being looked after to independence. An animated film, 'My name is Joe', about a child's experience of becoming looked after for the first time, is another example of the achievements of the children in care council. This work provides invaluable resources and information for children, young people and social workers nationally to help understand the experience of a child's journey through the care of a local authority.
83. The local authority is currently working with 22 young carers. In addition two voluntary sector agencies commissioned by the authority directly support 290 young carers. An enthusiastic group of 12 young carers meets regularly and is helping to raise awareness about their situations in caring for family members. However, there is need for elected members and senior managers to strengthen the impact and effectiveness of this group and raise awareness in order to identify young carers in the community.

The graded judgement for adoption performance is that it is good

84. Suitable adoptive families are identified quickly for children in Cambridgeshire when adoption is in their best interests. Adoption is considered within a broader context of securing the most suitable permanence options for children, encompassing long-term fostering and special guardianship order applications.
85. Permanency planning in Cambridgeshire is rigorous and is subject to regular senior management oversight and scrutiny. Permanency is considered from an early stage, with careful monitoring by children's independent reviewing officers from their second review. Children awaiting permanency are closely tracked and any delays are identified and purposefully addressed.
86. Thirty three children had placement orders at the end of March 2014. Twenty two children with placement orders are awaiting adoptive families; active family finding is underway and all of these children have clear plans which are closely monitored, with 13 children having dates set for presentation at the adoption panel.
87. There is strong emphasis on placing brothers and sisters together, with convincing 'together or apart' decisions being made to inform family finding. A small minority of children awaiting matches have serious learning and physical

disabilities and all opportunities are taken to advertise these children as widely as possible.

88. Cambridgeshire demonstrates necessary urgency in family finding using the full range of national and local recruitment opportunities, including adoption activity days, eastern region consortium adoption exchange days, referrals to other local authority and voluntary adoption agencies and the national adoption register. Annual numbers of enquiries about adoption have substantially increased from 200 in 2011–2012 to 343 in 2013–14. Careful profiling of children is given particular attention to enable good quality matches to be made. To further strengthen family finding activities, staff have attended a recent consortium event as part of the local authority's drive to attract more same sex couples and single gay applicants and adopters from ethnic minority groups.
89. The Department for Education's adoption scorecard shows that Cambridgeshire is in the top quarter of local authorities and on an upward trajectory, with the percentage of looked after children adopted increasing year on year to 17% in 2013. Adoption scorecard performance is also particularly effective in the average time between children entering care and being placed with their adoptive families, and the average time between a placement order and an adoptive match. The authority's scorecard performance on children who wait less than 20 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive families is less strong, with 51% waiting longer than 20 months against a national average of 55%. The authority recognises the need to respond to the increasing demand for adoptive families. As a result, they have taken the initiative and established Coram Cambridgeshire Adoption (CCA) as a voluntary adoption agency, building on an existing partnership arrangement. This new initiative has secured significant investment from the DfE and is likely to further develop the effectiveness, efficiency and pace of adoption activities in Cambridgeshire, further accelerating progress for the benefit of children and adopters.
90. Adopters receive comprehensive training in both the pre-adoptive and post-adoption phases; adopters commented favourably on the quality and range of training offered. Staff training is similarly comprehensive, and recent courses have focused on disruptions, the two stage adopter assessment process and the national adoption reform agenda. Further specific training and development work is planned to support life story work and later life work, sibling work and assessments and child permanence. These programmes are planned in conjunction with the workforce development team and clinical services. Some adopters have particularly welcomed training and support from unit clinicians on both attachment and the impact on early childhood development of neglectful and abusive parenting.
91. The Adoption and Permanence Panel is effective in its functions, exercising close scrutiny of child permanency reports and prospective adopter reports. The panel chair is effective in her leadership role. The panel carefully considers

placement matching, an important contributory factor to low post-adoption disruption rates. There are two panels, meeting a total of three times a month, illustrating the importance provided to timely matching and permanency planning. Panel members are effective and experienced; they receive annual appraisals and attend regular training. New members have a structured induction programme.

92. The overall quality of prospective adopter assessments seen by inspectors is good, with the recent two-stage process embedding well. 80% of assessments are completed within timescales and, where there is potential for delay, appropriate tracking procedures are in place to ensure a timely conclusion to adopter's approvals. The level of analysis could be more developed in a minority of assessments seen, but recent training on assessment by BAAF and Coram, alongside the input of unit clinicians, is gradually improving the analytical component of assessments. The quality of child permanence reports is reported by the adoption panel to be less consistent, with some containing insufficient evidence of parents' views and post-adoption support plans. Safeguarding checks on prospective adopters are particularly thorough and comprehensive.
93. 134 adoptive families were referred for adoption support services in 2013–14. Support is timely, considered and comprehensive and adopters spoken to clearly value the support packages they and their children receive. Support plans seen encompassed practical, financial, clinical and therapeutic elements. The latter were particularly beneficial in addressing underlying attachment difficulties presenting at key chronological transition stages in the form of challenging behaviours both at home and school. There were no adoption breakdowns in 2013–2014, which is illustrative of the quality and range of support provided. A specialist adoption support team also provides support for carers with special guardianship orders, further exemplifying Cambridgeshire's commitment to successful permanency for children for whom adoption is not a feasible option.
94. The adoption service is not yet outstanding as assessments and child permanence reports require some improvements and the planned joint agency with Coram is not yet operational, so its impact is yet to be demonstrated. However, some elements of the service, particularly adoption support, are bordering on exceptional performance. The local authority expects the new partnership to quickly bring current good performance to an outstanding level.

<p>The graded judgement about the experiences and progress of care leavers is good</p>

95. Most of Cambridgeshire's current cohort of 211 care leavers aged over 18 years are prepared well and supported by their personal advisers in navigating effective transitions to adulthood. Young people spoken to by inspectors value

the availability and support of their personal advisers. Direct practice observed with young people, and case files audited and sampled by inspectors, demonstrated that personal advisers have a good understanding of young people's strengths and vulnerabilities and develop purposeful and trusting professional relationships with them.

96. Care leavers are seen regularly by their personal advisers and their views, wishes and concerns are explicit in the majority of case records. Group supervision meetings are held weekly and some records of these meetings show evidence of reflection and alternative hypotheses being explored. A clinician is providing interim cover to the 18 to 25 team, with permanent recruitment planned to strengthen the same systemic practice model deployed across other operational teams in children's services.
97. Care leavers have been instrumental in producing an information passport that will contain information for young people on health, accommodation options, entitlements and benefits. Young people will be able to update their passports incrementally, to reduce the need to repeat key information, for example to add new housing or health providers.
98. Information for young people about their entitlements to education, benefits, health support, work and post-16 learning has been further strengthened by a lively section for looked after children and care leavers on a 'Youthoria' website. Young people designed this interactive section on the website, reflecting the care taken by the authority to promote the meaningful involvement and participation of looked after young people and care leavers in improving services.
99. Care leavers contribute significantly to service development through their engagement in 'Voices Matter', Cambridgeshire's Children in Care Council. This is a highly effective, innovative and creative forum for the active participation of care leavers in describing their experiences of care, manifested partly through the production of two award winning videos. 'Voices Matter' attempts to engage all care leavers, as well as the highly motivated, to ensure a representative cross section of the cohort. Care leavers are involved in officer recruitment processes and routinely engage in commissioning programmes. The local authority highly values the contribution of their care leavers in the routine development of service provision, and regularly seeks their feedback on services provided.
100. 90% of young people reported feeling safe where they live. The local authority enhancing the quality and range of its accommodation for care leavers. 245 places have been made available in supported accommodation settings through a recent commissioning exercise in which young people have been involved. Further semi-independent placements are being commissioned to increase capacity in this type of accommodation. Regular visits are undertaken by the Access to Resources Team to monitor the quality of provision.

101. A revised housing protocol was launched in April 2014, outlining expectations regarding care leavers' entitlements to housing. This has been adopted by housing departments in district and city councils. There is clear management information about the 10% of care leavers who are known not to be living in suitable accommodation. The authority has recently surveyed care leavers, noting that a small minority do not feel safe in their accommodation. This survey included young people known to be living in unsuitable accommodation and arrangements. Young people for example, who are living with friends and 'sofa surfing', a small number who have completely disengaged from the service, and a small number of care leavers who are held in youth offending institutions. The local authority understands the considerable challenges involved in securing a sufficiently varied and suitable range of accommodation for care leavers aged over 18 years in a large, diverse shire county, and is actively pursuing plans to continue developing its provision.
102. Bed and breakfast accommodation is used only as a last resort, with any placements being reviewed on a weekly basis by senior managers. There were no young people in bed and breakfast accommodation during the inspection, although six young people have been accommodated in bed and breakfast for short periods earlier in 2014. All of these young people were aged over 16 years.
103. Staying Put arrangements are in place and support the local authority's urgency in securing longer term suitable arrangements for care leavers. The financial package offered to foster carers adheres to the 'no detriment' principle, and it is expected that numbers will gradually rise. Staying Put arrangements and expectations are addressed in commissioning agreements with the large percentage of looked after children placed with independent fostering agencies, to ensure this option is open to all young people on the verge of leaving care.
104. Pathway planning has been recognised by the local authority as an area that requires further improvement. Training has been recently provided to social workers and personal advisers. The needs assessments elements of pathway plans are comprehensive, showing a good understanding of young people's histories, strengths, vulnerabilities and aspirations. The plans themselves, however, are not always succinct, outcome focused or measurable and are not, in the majority of those seen by inspectors, meaningful guides for young people. Pathway plans should be more reliably updated at a minimum of every six months.
105. The proportion of care leavers who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is significantly higher than both statistical neighbour and England averages. The gap with the non-looked after cohort of young people in Cambridgeshire is very marked where a relatively low 4.3% are NEET. In March 2014, 62% of care leavers aged 19 years were NEET, compared to a national average of 42%. Currently, 30 care leavers are young mothers. The proportion of young people who are engaged in education, employment and training is higher at age 21 and has increased in the last few months.

106. Senior management attention is being focused on high NEET rates for Cambridgeshire care leavers, and the imminent addition of a specialist EET personal adviser post in the 18 to 25 service will strengthen help for young people into education, training and employment.
107. The authority has a variety of initiatives in place, including traineeship and apprenticeship programmes and 'Care 2 Work'. The corporate parenting board has a dedicated work stream on improving education, employment and training levels but this is not yet delivering an improvement in performance. Tracking is being developed to identify and target support to 16 to 18 year olds who are at greater risk of disengaging from education, employment and training.
108. Greater emphasis by the virtual school on improving the participation and attainment levels of young people aged 16 and 17 years would both prepare for the raising of the participation age in 2014/15 and could assist in reducing the number of young people who disengage from employment, education and training in the three years following their eighteenth birthdays. A relatively low number of Cambridgeshire care leavers, currently 11, attend university.
109. The health needs of care leavers are clearly assessed in pathway plans, with help available from the looked after children nurse who regularly attends 18-25 team meetings. Care leavers are effectively supported and signposted to sexual health and substance misuse services as required. The local authority has put in place a plan to improve access to good quality emotional and mental health services for care leavers. As part of this approach, there is increasing evidence that clinicians are having a positive impact in facilitating transitions for 12 care leavers to adult mental health services.
110. Senior managers have acted to reduce payment delays and accelerate access to provision for young people living outside the authority's boundaries. They are auditing care leavers' use of mental health services, to establish a baseline to expand the range of provision moving forward.
111. Care leavers spoken to by inspectors reported that their personal advisers support them effectively in developing independent living skills. The authority acknowledges that there is more to do to ensure that all young people and care leavers can get help with budgeting, cooking, maintaining a tenancy and other aspects of preparing for independence. Older looked after young people resident in the authority's own children's homes benefit from a social pedagogy model which features independence preparation.
112. Performance management arrangements supporting the 18 to 25 service are robust. Senior managers have set out clear strategies and plans for addressing priorities. Relevant data are regularly scrutinised and targets set where improvements are needed.

Leadership, management and governance

Key Judgement	Judgement Grade
Leadership, management and governance	Good

113. In September 2012 Ofsted judged child protection arrangements in Cambridgeshire to be inadequate. This led to an improvement notice being served by the Department for Education (DfE). By February 2013 the authority had acted upon all of the recommendations of the Ofsted inspection and developed a further improvement plan that extended beyond the requirements of the improvement notice.
114. The authority knows itself well and through the improvement agenda has taken the opportunity to robustly challenge itself about the quality of its services and front line practice for children and their families. It recognises the strengths within its service, in particular the targeted support to children and families, the model of social work practice in Cambridgeshire which provides opportunities for social workers and clinicians to work together to manage risk, the voice of the children and young people captured in their assessments and plans, and the significant contribution that children and young people, and care leavers make to service delivery. Areas of weakness are known and robust action is being taken to support service improvement including improving the quality of case recording and achieving a more analytical approach to assessments and care planning and ensuring a greater focus on the wider impact of equality and diversity issues for children, young people and their families.
115. The senior management team has the full support of the Chief Executive and leaders of the council who are strong advocates for children and young people. The Chief Executive has regular meetings with the Director of Children's Services (DCS). He has not however, undertaken a formal annual test of assurance of the Director in his role leading both adults' and children's services to formally assure himself of his capacity to focus effectively on children's social care.
116. The DCS meets regularly with senior leaders within the authority and key strategic partners. As a result, senior leaders have a clear understanding of operational practice, service demands and any gaps in provision. Positive and effective strategic links have been made with Cafcass, the courts and the Local Family Justice Board and with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. This ensures robust governance of the wider role of the council in the planning and delivery of services and helps to promote strategic synergy, holding partners to account in safeguarding children and young people and driving forward improvement.

117. There has been a clear focus on priorities, which are influenced by the joint strategic needs assessment and through effective partnership arrangements. These include the Children's Trust and voluntary and community sector organisations. Priorities are translated well through strategic planning across the partnership.
118. The authority has demonstrated that it is open to learning from both external and internal review and challenge. A DCS from another authority, who is a member of the Improvement Board, provides independent scrutiny of progress against the plan and communicates directly with the DfE to triangulate findings against the authority's self-assessment. Two local peer reviews have provided additional external challenge.
119. The authority has robust commissioning arrangements defined through local needs analysis. Contracts with providers meet stringent safeguarding standards, are subject to ongoing scrutiny and are expected to demonstrate improving and positive outcomes for children and young people. Service user feedback influences strategic planning. A recent example has seen children and young people actively involved in interviews with providers tendering for accommodation contracts for care leavers. Children and young people told inspectors that this made them feel valued by senior managers, and they believe the authority respects that they are experts in their own situations.
120. The authority has been methodical in redesigning children's services and has followed the child's journey in their improvement planning. Early help has been reconstructed and the co-location of locality teams based around clusters of schools has been central to the success of prevention and early intervention. Moving the Integrated Access Team into the multi-agency referral unit (MARU) and appointing a senior health professional based in the MARU has brought together key professionals to provide a more efficient risk assessment and referral process. These changes have also improved information sharing between partner agencies. This closer joint working ensures that there is an appropriate response given to children and young people in need of help and protection.
121. There have been significant improvements in coordinated multi-agency activity to reduce and understand the reasons for children going missing and being at risk of child sexual exploitation. Multi-agency governance arrangements have been developed to deliver a new domestic violence partnership, which is improving the quality and reach of services to children and adults affected by domestic violence.
122. The workforce development strategy is firmly in place and has been effective in taking forward priorities identified within the improvement plan. The strategy includes plans to use the authority's 30 agency social workers in a positive and constructive way to back fill vacancies, cover maternity leave and support newly qualified social workers until they have sufficient experience to carry more complex cases and in ensuring that they have a safe place to start to practice.

123. Social work caseloads are appropriate to skill level and are manageable. Staff are supported through a wide range of internal and external training programmes. The authority has taken steps to retain experienced social workers by ensuring that the salary scale of consultant social workers is on par with team manager roles in recognition of them holding complex cases. In addition, incremental pay increases are offered for newly qualified social workers completing their post-qualifying year. This demonstrates the authority's on-going commitment to resourcing frontline services.
124. Senior and operational managers in Cambridgeshire make extensive use of audits and thematic reviews to identify areas for improvement. Children and young people are supported to feed back their experience of interventions through NYAS and a children's participation officer supports looked after children to have a voice. The authority also offers opportunities for staff to give feedback through their 'tell us' website. This enables everyone in the organisation to think about what they are doing, what impact this is having on children, young people and their families and how things could be done better.
125. There is a strong focus on performance management that continually drives improvement in services. The rigorous culture of performance management has demonstrated sustained improvement in the quality and frequency of visits to children and 100% of child protection conferences are held within timescales. Monthly performance information is set against challenging targets for improvement in a way that is transparent and clearly shows where improvement is taking place and where it is not.
126. Inspectors have found evidence of effective quality assurance, management oversight and support for work in most teams, including practice scrutiny by senior managers who regularly chair legal and accommodation panels. This is providing direct management scrutiny and shared decision making on high-risk, complex work.
127. Supervision for social workers and managers is regular, and decision making is mostly effective and timely. Reflective discussion takes place largely within social work units. There is success in the unit model in promoting reflective discussion; however, this can divert managers from discussing children's cases within direct supervision with social workers. As a result, individual social workers' skills and development needs may not be sufficiently explored or translated into individual professional development plans.
128. Senior managers are viewed as being supportive and visible, and they have high expectations of their social workers in terms of performance and quality standards. Social workers have told inspectors that they are proud to work in Cambridgeshire because of the sustained support they receive from skilled, experienced and accessible managers. This means social workers feel safe, secured and valued, which allows good safeguarding social work to flourish.

What the inspection judgements mean: the local authority

An **outstanding** local authority leads highly effective services that contribute to significantly improved outcomes for children and young people who need help and protection and care. Their progress exceeds expectations and is sustained over time.

A **good** local authority leads effective services that help, protect and care for children and young people and those who are looked after and care leavers have their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

In a local authority that **requires improvement**, there are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the authority is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children, young people and families.

A local authority that is **inadequate** is providing services where there are widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm or result in children looked after or care leavers not having their welfare safeguarded and promoted.

Section 2: The effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is good

The arrangements in place to evaluate the effectiveness of what is done by the authority and board partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of children are good.

Areas for improvement

- 129. A comprehensive data report should be developed to enable partners to understand performance across all services and to identify and challenge areas where improvements in practice are required.
- 130. The LSCB training strategy should be informed by analysis of the child protection training undertaken by different professional groups across all partner agencies.
- 131. The LSCB and health commissioners should ensure that there is a cohesive approach to the provision of child protection medicals in acute cases.

Key strengths and weaknesses of the LSCB

- 132. Governance arrangements between the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and the Local Authority are effective. The independent Chair of the LSCB has regular meetings with the DCS, Chief Executive and the Lead Member to ensure that the local authority is fulfilling its safeguarding duties.
- 133. Governance arrangements are in place between the LSCB and the Health and Wellbeing Board but it is too early to evaluate their effectiveness. The Health and Wellbeing Board has received the LSCB Annual Report.
- 134. The Chair of the LSCB is a member of the Children's Trust Board and has presented the Annual Report to the board. The LSCB Chair is also a member of the local authority Improvement Board.
- 135. There is clarity of role and function between the LSCB and Improvement Board and the LSCB receives regular reports from the Improvement Board about progress being made against the improvement plan.
- 136. The LSCB has a focus on monitoring the implementation of the successful Strengthening Families approach to child protection conferences and oversight of audits to support practice development. The Chair recognises that social work practice requires improvement to be good and to ensure that all children receive a quality service. The variability in the quality of some social work

practice remains a focus for the LSCB through practice scrutiny and training opportunities for practitioners.

137. The LSCB has effective leadership and active support from political leaders. The LSCB is a strong partnership and is well constituted with members at the correct level of seniority to enable the key priorities identified in the annual report and business plan to be driven forward. The contribution of lay members is positive and they use their knowledge, skills and understanding of the local communities to influence the priorities, seeking explanations and ensuring that actions are followed through.
138. The membership of the Board meets statutory requirements, and members are energetic and resourceful in their commitment and actions to improve practice. Although it has been difficult to secure a consistent representative from secondary schools, the Board has ensured that secondary schools are involved and that information is shared appropriately through the education sub-group. Partners financially support the work of the LSCB.
139. The Chair is well supported through a small dedicated core team. The Board uses a range of multi-agency sub-committees and task and finish groups to progress the work plan. Four Local Practice Groups provide a critical forum for disseminating learning from audits and management reviews, providing training and hearing directly from front line practitioners. This is an effective mechanism for communication both to and from the Board. Practitioners across a range of agencies who spoke with inspectors had a good understanding of the LSCB's priorities and the learning from serious case reviews and audits.
140. Partners hold each other to account for each agency's role and contribution to the safety and protection of young people in the area and the LSCB has been effective in determining priorities which are relevant to the local area and has overseen progress as plans have been implemented. There is evidence of positive impact from the Board's work in co-ordinating services in protecting children from child sexual exploitation and domestic abuse
141. The LSCB business plan lacks detailed actions that can be clearly measured and monitored by the Board. The LSCB Annual Report is compliant with statutory requirements, assessing the performance and effectiveness of local services. It contains evidence of challenge with examples of positive impact and areas where work is still needed. It reports on achievements, challenges and progress against strategic priorities. The report shows that the Board has scrutinised pertinent areas, including private fostering, allegations against staff, child sexual exploitation (CSE) and missing children. The report includes lessons from serious case reviews and child death and management reviews. It also provides evidence that the LSCB is fulfilling its statutory functions and having a positive impact on improving safeguarding services to local children.
142. The LSCB has been influential in service development through their leadership of the development of the Multi Agency Referral Unit (MARU) and the

implementation of the Model of Staged Intervention (MOSI) which clearly outline thresholds for intervention. There is evidence that both are operating effectively.

143. The LSCB operates an effective culture of scrutiny and challenge across the partnership. There is an embedded approach to both single and multi-agency audits, and management reviews. The LSCB maintains a risk register to record and monitor risks which have been identified by the partnership. The Chair has effectively challenged the lack of strategic ownership of Domestic Abuse; with the result that a Domestic Abuse governance board has been established which is driving clear improvements, including a review of CAADA/DASH risk assessments. This initiative has led to more families being helped, with a 30% increase in referrals and the need to increase MARAC to fortnightly meetings, for which the police have allocated additional resourcing.
144. The LSCB has been consulted on and influenced the early help offer, and monitors the effectiveness of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) outcomes. 80% of closed CAFs show that families have made progress.
145. The LSCB commissioned a range of multi-agency audits to evaluate the effectiveness of front line practice to safeguard children. These have been conducted to a good standard with multi-agency involvement in the process and sound recommendations for improvement. Areas audited recently include pre-mobile babies, sexual exploitation and domestic abuse. The findings from audit work are used to inform practice and service developments.
146. The LSCB has also considered audits carried out by individual agencies and shared learning across the partnership. 31 organisations carried out a section 11 self-assessment. The LSCB found that agencies participated with openness and integrity. Analysis of each standard indicated high levels of compliance. Areas for development were followed up by the LSCB business manager, with action plans monitored by the Quality and Effectiveness sub-committee.
147. The LSCB reviews a range of data on a quarterly basis. However, the data set does not sufficiently represent all agencies' contribution to safeguarding practice and does not yet fully support an understanding of effective practice across the whole partnership. For example, there has been no regular reporting on attendance at child protection case conferences, which the Board identified as an area for improvement for some agencies last November. Whilst there is some progress in reporting parental attendance there is no understanding of how well fathers in particular are engaging with the child protection process.
148. The LSCB has been instrumental in ensuring a strong focus on CSE. The CSE task and finish group chaired by the police has been particularly energetic and resourceful in developing the interagency CSE strategy and action plan, using learning and research from other areas. The strategy has focused on raising awareness among young people, schools and professionals, for example through creative media presented to all year nine pupils, including those in the

YOS (youth offending service), looked after children and those in other education settings. The partnership has identified 80 children at risk of CSE, and there is evidence of increased awareness amongst most groups of staff. However, the group rightly believe that more children are at risk than have so far been identified, and has plans to implement a more proactive approach. To meet the anticipated increase in demand, the police have increased their resourcing for CSE.

149. The police undertake safe and well checks and independent return home interviews are conducted for children who go missing from home or care. Children who are missing out on education and those who are home educated are also considered.
150. The SCR sub-committee has good representation from all relevant agencies. It is robust in its examination of issues and its members are committed to identifying learning in a way which positively engages front line staff and ensures that changes are made to practice for the benefit of Cambridgeshire children.
151. In the last 12 months there have been eight serious incident notices made to Ofsted resulting in three SCRs, with plans for a review arising from three recent suicide cases. A range of methods have been used to review cases and these are evaluated for their effectiveness. Helpful summaries have been produced and disseminated, and staff are able to demonstrate how they have used this to influence their practice.
152. The child death overview process is effective and appropriate professionals attend the meetings involved. In response to local child deaths, the LSCB has launched a safe sleeping campaign.
153. The independent chair is to become a member of the Corporate Parenting Board. The LSCB is considering ways in which it can strengthen its role in relation to children in care and provide oversight of those children who live outside the county.
154. The LSCB provides a comprehensive and high quality training programme which is well attended by all agencies. There is a pool of multi-agency trainers and training is accredited to ensure that it is of a good standard. LSCB trainers have worked hard to ensure that the voice of children is heard through training and this is a strong theme in the Board's work.
155. An innovative service 'Beat Bullying' consists of 30 trained 'Cyber Mentors' provided by pupils at a local senior school and which supports young people who are bullied, including those who are self-harming. Young people provide on-line mentoring on a monitored site and can refer to adult life mentors or counsellors should concerns escalate. The Cyber Mentors presented to over 200 delegates at the recent LSCB conference.

156. The LSCB does not have a comprehensive analysis of the safeguarding training need in Cambridgeshire or the training undertaken by different professional groups across all partner agencies. Health agencies and schools, early years and education settings are able to report on the level of training within their workforce, but this does not yet extend to other agencies.
157. Designated professionals in schools, early years and education settings do not receive their core safeguarding training in multi-agency groups, although it is delivered by an inter-professional group of trainers. This approach reduces the opportunity for interagency understanding and learning.
158. The Board has actively considered how to evaluate the impact of training, and uses evidence from delegates' self-reports and the reports of their managers to evidence improvement in knowledge, skills and confidence. The LSCB is working with the NSPCC and the Tavistock clinic to develop its approach to embedding learning. The LSCB has developed a learning and improvement framework which, although helpful, does not yet use learning from complaints to influence service developments.

What the inspection judgements mean: the LSCB

An **outstanding** LSCB is highly influential in improving the care and protection of children. Their evaluation of performance is exceptional and helps the local authority and its partners to understand the difference that services make and where they need to improve. The LSCB creates and fosters an effective learning culture.

An LSCB that is **good** coordinates the activity of statutory partners and monitors the effectiveness of local arrangements. Multi-agency training in the protection and care of children is effective and evaluated regularly for impact. The LSCB provides robust and rigorous evaluation and analysis of local performance that identifies areas for improvement and influences the planning and delivery of high-quality services.

An LSCB **requires improvement** if it does not yet demonstrate the characteristics of good.

An LSCB that is **inadequate** does not demonstrate that it has effective arrangements in place and the required skills to discharge its statutory functions. It does not understand the experiences of children and young people locally and fails to identify where improvements can be made.

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