

Portsmouth City 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: 25 June 2014 – 16 July 2014

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The overall judgement is that children's services require improvement

The authority is not yet delivering good protection, help or care for children, young people and families.

It is Ofsted's expectation that, as a minimum, all children and young people receive good help, care and protection.²

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	Requires Improvement
3. Leadership, management and governance	Good

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.

² A full description of what the inspection judgements mean can be found at the end of this report.

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The local authority

Summary of findings

Children's services in Portsmouth require improvement because:

1. Although there have been real improvements made in some service areas, there remain key issues to be addressed in relation to services for children who need help and protection and also services and outcomes for care leavers.
2. Thresholds between early help and social work services are not sufficiently understood by all professionals, so some children and families do not get the right level of service as their needs increase.
3. The lack of defined timescales for the completion of actions within the Joint Action Team means that some children and families do not receive help in a timely manner.
4. Access to early help services for older children when they first need support is not sufficiently comprehensive.
5. The local authority's response to children who are living in private fostering arrangements is not sufficiently robust to ensure that these children are given the level of protection and support they need.
6. Data about children missing from home, including feedback from return interviews, is not being systematically analysed or used to ensure that children are being appropriately safeguarded.
7. Elected members are not sufficiently skilled and knowledgeable to offer effective challenge and scrutiny of the work of children's social care, and to act as champions for looked after children.
8. Work with care leavers is too variable. Pathway plans are not sufficiently clear and too many care leavers are not engaged in education, employment or training (NEET).
9. Too many looked after children enter the criminal justice system.
10. The difference in the educational progress made by looked after children and their peers is widening.
11. Parental consent is not always sought or recorded before information is shared with other agencies.
12. The local authority had difficulty in providing accurate information about the number of care leavers and children missing from education because of contradictory management information.

What does the local authority need to improve?

Priority and immediate action

The right level of support

13. Review the processes for managing the flow of work within the Joint Action Team (JAT) so that children and families receive early help in a timely and well-co-ordinated way.
14. Improve systems for 'stepping up' support to children and families from early help to social work services when their needs warrant more intensive intervention.

Parental consent

15. Ensure that parental consent is consistently sought and recorded before information is shared unless the risks to the child make it necessary to dispense with consent.

Governance and Corporate Parenting

16. Ensure that elected members are properly trained and are given high quality and relevant information by officers. This will allow them to appropriately scrutinise and challenge the work of children's social care and act as effective champions for children who are looked after.

Areas for improvement

Early help

17. Improve access to early help and support for older children through better use of Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and Team around the Child (TAC) processes.

Quality and continuity of care and support

18. Improve the stability of short-term placements for 16 and 17 year olds who are looked after so that they have continuity in the care that they receive.
19. Ensure that action is taken to understand the patterns of offending by looked after children, and take appropriate action to address this.

Missing children

20. Ensure that data about children missing from home, including feedback from return interviews, are being systematically used to help safeguard children.

Post-adoption support

21. Ensure that post-adoption support plans are appropriately detailed, outcome focused and linked to the child's permanence report and potential adopter's report.

Support for care leavers

22. Ensure that pathway plans are clear and explicit and deliver improved outcomes for care leavers, and that every care leaver has a copy of their health histories in a format that is accessible to them.

Race and ethnicity

23. Ensure that the ethnic profile of the adoption panel reflects the diversity of the local community and of children for whom adoption is the best outcome.

The local authority's strengths

24. Senior managers know many of their services well, are committed to continuous improvement and are taking concerted action to raise standards and improve outcomes for children and young people.
25. Services for children and families are based on good strategic planning, sound partnership working and effective joint commissioning arrangements.
26. Quality assurance and performance management systems are well established. These are generally used effectively to identify and address shortfalls in the quality of practice or delivery of services.
27. Most children and families with additional needs are identified early and are receiving effective help and support, resulting in a reduction in the number of families requiring statutory social work intervention.
28. The Social Work Matters programme is having a positive impact, improving social work practice and outcomes for children and young people; the recruitment and retention of social workers is good.
29. Most looked after children are living in placements with families near to the communities they come from, more often than not with their brothers and sisters.
30. Foster carers are well supported and have good access to high quality training.
31. Independent reviewing officers (IROs) are effective in promoting best practice; 90% of looked after children participated in their statutory reviews, and 75% of parents and carers contributed to them.
32. Adoption services have improved considerably over the past two years. More children are achieving permanence in a timely way either through adoption or a special guardianship order.
33. Post-adoption support is good; there have been no adoption disruptions in the past twelve months.
34. Comprehensive systems are in place to consult with parents, carers and children. This ensures that their experiences inform improvements in the development and delivery of service.

Progress since the last inspection

35. The last Ofsted inspection of Portsmouth was undertaken in June 2011 (Safeguarding and looked after children services). The judgement for safeguarding services was adequate and the judgement for services for looked after children was good. The recommendations inspectors made in 2011 have been acted on, with some important improvements being made.
36. In Portsmouth, families can now get help with their problems and difficulties when they first need it, with services being better organised so that in most cases families get support at the right time. This has been possible because different agencies have worked together well and have helped each other to improve local services.
37. The quality of social work assessments has improved and there is now better recording, planning and management oversight of cases. As a result, children, young people and their families receive a range of services that meet their needs
38. When Ofsted last inspected Portsmouth City Council, inspectors found that children's social care was trying to help too many families, and that some of these families could be supported by someone else. There are now fewer referrals to children's social care and, as a result, social workers have more time to work with the children and young people who most need their help and support.
39. There is still further work needed to ensure that when the needs of families increase these are properly recognised and assessments by social work services are commenced.

Summary for children and young people

- Most of the children and young people who are being looked after by the local authority are being well cared for. Inspectors were pleased to see that most of these children and young people are living close to their families and friends, and that those who are living further from home are being looked after well.
- Social workers care about the children they are helping, and most children are visited often. Social workers are working hard to make sure that children understand why they are looked after and what the plan for their future care will be. Children's and parents' views are listened to and written down, and this is helping social workers, managers and other professionals to make good decisions.
- Inspectors found that the adoption team are doing everything they can to find permanent families for children who cannot live with their own families, and that when children are adopted they are well supported and are happy with their new families.
- The local authority needs to make sure that looked after children and care leavers have fewer changes of social worker because these relationships are very important. Improvements also need to be made so that children and young people can get hold of their social workers when they need to speak to them.
- The local authority needs to make sure that all care leavers are helped to attend school, college or university or to get a job or apprenticeship, because at the moment there are far too many care leavers who are not doing any of these things. This will help these young people to achieve more and be happier both now and in the future.
- Councillors in Portsmouth need to take more of an interest in services for children and families. These adults have important responsibilities in making sure that services are of good quality and that local children, young people and families get the right help and support when they need it.

Information about this local authority area³

Children living in this area

- Approximately 42,800 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in Portsmouth. This is 20.6% of the total population in the area.⁴
- Approximately 24.4% of the local authority's children are living in poverty (the England average is 20.1%).⁵
- The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
 - in primary and nursery schools is 21.3% (the national average is 18%)
 - in secondary schools is 20.1% (the national average is 15.7%).
- Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 20.1% of all children living in the area, compared with 21.6% in the country as a whole.
- The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are Mixed Ethnic Group: White and Asian (3.5%), Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi (3.5%) and White: Other White (2.9%). After English, Bengali and Polish are the most common languages spoken in Portsmouth schools.
- The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:
 - in primary schools is 15.1% (the national average is 18.7%)
 - in secondary schools is 12% (the national average is 14.3%).
- Portsmouth has a relatively high proportion of Armed Forces personnel resident in the city, with 2.3% of the adult population compared to the England average of 0.3%. The city's child poverty rate (24.4%) masks significant differences at ward level, with rates ranging from 6.3% to 48.1%.

Child protection in this area

- At 31st March 2014, 1,339 children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist children's service. This is an increase from 1,277 at 31st March 2013.
- At 31st March 2014, 234 children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan. This is an increase from 183 at 31st March 2013.
- At 31st March 2014, 8 children lived in a privately arranged fostering placement. This is an increase from 2 at 31st March 2013.

³ 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.

⁴ Source: 2013 Mid-year population estimates (ONS)

⁵ All children. Source: Children in low-income families local measure, August 2011 (HMRC)

Children looked after in this area

- At 31st March 2014, 318 children were being looked after by the local authority (a rate of 74.8 per 10,000 children). This is an increase from 306 (72.0 per 10,000 children) at 31st March 2013. Of this number:
 - 177 (or 59%) live outside the local authority area. 38 children (or 13.1%) live more than 20 miles from home
 - 19 live in residential children's homes, of whom 42% live out of the authority area
 - 4 live in residential special schools⁶, of whom 100% live out of the authority area
 - 225 live with foster families, of whom 63% live out of the authority area
 - 10 live with parents, of whom none live out of the authority area
 - 5 children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- In the last 12 months:
 - there have been 27 adoptions
 - 27 children became subjects of special guardianship orders
 - 164 children have ceased to be looked after, of whom 9% subsequently returned to be looked after. Of the 163 children who started to be looked after in 2013–14, 2.5% had a prior 'returned home' LAC episode ending less than 12 months ago
 - 14 children and young people have ceased to be looked after and moved on to independent living
 - 28 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 two children's homes. One was judged to be good or outstanding in its most recent Ofsted inspection. Until June 2014, the local authority operated three children's homes, two were judged to be good at their most recent Ofsted inspection and the third was judged as adequate. The local authority also operates a short-term break unit judged good at the full inspection in September 2013, and judged to be making satisfactory progress at the interim inspection in January 2014
- The previous inspection of Portsmouth's safeguarding arrangements was in May 2011. The local authority was judged to be adequate (Grade 3).

⁶ These are residential special schools that look after children for fewer than 295 days.

- The previous inspection of Portsmouth's services for looked after children was in May 2011. The local authority was judged to be good (Grade 2).

Other information about this area

- The Director of Children's Services has been in post since September 2009.
- The Chair of the LSCB has been in post since December 2013.

Inspection judgements about the local authority

Key judgement	Judgement grade
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires improvement
<p>Summary</p> <p>Agencies work well together to offer support to families when help is first needed. They offer a range of good quality support to help improve the lives of children and their families. Although there are clear thresholds between early help and statutory children protection work, these are not always interpreted effectively. As a result, some children and families, when their needs become more complex or risks in their lives increase, do not get a service from a social worker soon enough.</p> <p>Where children are at immediate risk of harm, social workers make sure that they are safe and that their families are helped to reduce risk in their children’s lives. Social workers have manageable caseloads which allow them time to work directly with children and their families and to build up good relationships with them. However, information about why children go missing is not used well enough to help understand the reasons for their behaviour and services to children who are privately fostered are not sufficiently well developed.</p>	

40. Children and families benefit from a wide range of effective early help services, leading to a significant decrease in the number of children requiring specialist social care services. A high proportion of vulnerable two-year-olds are taking up their entitlement to good quality child care, with 5 of the 7 children’s centres that have been inspected being judged as good or better. Evidence-based parenting programmes are delivered through children’s centres and schools are helping parents to engage more effectively with their children. Targeted services, including Multi-Systemic Therapy and an enhanced Family Nurse Partnership, are having a beneficial impact. Parents’ and carers’ feedback reflect the positive difference that these initiatives are making. The percentage of re-referrals have fallen to 20%, significantly below the statistical neighbour average, which indicates that a higher percentage of children and families are having their needs met at an earlier stage.
41. More needs to be done to ensure that secondary schools are fully engaged in offering early help. School exclusion and absence rates remain above national averages. Older children, particularly those between 11 and 16 years of age, are less likely to be supported through a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) or a Team around the Child (TAC). While the Intensive Targeted Youth Support Service has had some success supporting young people into education, employment and training (EET), 8.1% of young people in Portsmouth are not in education, employment or training (NEET). That is above the national average of 7.6%.

42. Partners understand the threshold criteria for access to children's social care services, which are clearly set out in the joint Children's Trust and Portsmouth Safeguarding Children Board protocol. There has been a significant reduction in inappropriate referrals to children's social care. A qualified social work manager screens all contacts and referrals taken by a team of administrators, and swiftly determines whether they meet the criteria for social care intervention or whether children and families would be better served by an early help package of support. The way in which those decisions are recorded does not always make it easy to understand the rationale. It is also not always evident – in either telephone responses to referrals, electronic referral records or other recorded decision-making – that staff have assured themselves that parental consent to share information has been sought when necessary.
43. The multi-agency Joint Action Team (JAT), established in 2012, is located alongside the social care Information and Assessment Team. Workers are allocated tasks to mobilise support for children and families through establishing lead professionals to support the completion of CAFs and establishing Team around the Child processes to support these plans. Although data collected by the authority show that most of these tasks are completed within twenty working days, the lack of clear timescales and quality assurance within the JAT means that some cases were not properly prioritised, resulting in some children not receiving timely support. Although thresholds are clear, the interpretation of the thresholds is not applied consistently between managers. 'Step up' arrangements to social care are not sufficiently robust, and inspectors saw examples of children and families who are being supported through a CAF who would be better served by an earlier escalation to children's social care. Professionals who spoke to inspectors confirmed that the process for 'stepping up' cases was not clear.
44. The volume of CAFs has increased, indicating that more children are being supported. However, the quality of CAF assessments and plans is still too variable. The 'CAF wheel', designed to evidence impact and outcomes of early help in a parent-friendly way, is not yet sufficiently embedded.
45. There is a good and effective interface between the Out of Hours Service, which is commissioned through a neighbouring authority, and day time services. There is a good and timely response to the needs of children and families in most cases. However, inspectors identified a situation when the lack of availability of a qualified social worker resulted in the police carrying out a child protection investigation, out of office hours, without any social work involvement.

46. Social work assessments are completed in a timely way. Most assessments seen by inspectors, including those prepared for child protection conferences, were written in an accessible style, showed good use of history, a strong child focus and a balanced analysis leading to clear identification of the changes needed. However, a small number of assessments lacked a clear analysis of risks and protective factors or the likely impact on children, particularly in relation to the cumulative impact of chronic patterns of neglect.
47. Child in need and child protection plans are outcome focused and contain clear actions, accountabilities and timescales. Social workers know the children they are working with well and are able to articulate their needs, wishes and feelings. Case recording is up to date and the voice of the child is clear in most cases. This is supported by a case recording template with a strong child focus and by some good direct work with children and young people. With average caseloads of between 15 and 18, social workers have the time to see children regularly, including on their own when this is appropriate.
48. There are good 'step down' arrangements from statutory services to a CAF or TAC. Social workers are expected to ensure that families continue to receive the help and support that they need, albeit at a less intensive level, and inspectors saw examples of social workers helping to write the CAF and/or attending the first TAC meeting.
49. Child protection enquiries are timely and always led by qualified social workers with good management oversight. Most child protection strategy meetings are well attended and well recorded. The majority of strategy discussions involve only the police and children's social care, making it possible for action to be taken without the fullest possible picture of the child's circumstances. The recording of these discussions does not give enough information to show the plans for progressing the case. The local authority had recognised this as an area for improvement.
50. The timeliness of Child Protection Conferences has improved significantly, rising from 62% in 2012–13 that were held within 15 working days to 82% in May 2014. This has, resulted in more children having a timely multi-agency plan in place to address their needs. Independent advocates support and promote children's engagement with the child protection conference process. The number of children with a multi-agency child protection plan has increased in the last 12 months, and is now closer to the statistical neighbour average, 43.3% compared to 48.5%. Senior managers routinely scrutinise child protection plans to ensure quality and consistency. Core groups, share information appropriately, are well attended by a good range of professionals and are effective in monitoring and progressing child protection plans.

51. Social workers demonstrate good awareness of the impact of domestic abuse on children, and have access to a range of specialist advice and services. Direct observation of the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) suggested that this is an effective forum for planning and information sharing between agencies. MARAC minutes are scanned into the relevant child's case notes to ensure a good join up with child protection and child in need plans. Assessments and plans seen by inspectors showed that social workers are aware of the negative impact on children of parental drug and alcohol abuse and mental ill health. A specialist worker embedded in the Information and Assessment Team is responsible for extending the Think Family approach to adult mental health services.
52. The way in which data about children missing from home are collected and shared is not yet sufficiently robust. The local authority has only recently started routinely forwarding copies of all notifications from the police about children missing from home to the Barnardos' Miss-U service for them to conduct return interviews. Data, and information from return interviews, are not being systematically analysed, nor is it clear how return interviews are being used to inform decision-making and planning for individual children or to inform service developments and actions.
53. There are 15 children in Portsmouth who are missing from education; 90 children who are electively home educated and 166 children who are on reduced timetables. All these groups of children are effectively tracked.
54. The local authority's response to children who are living in private fostering arrangements is not yet sufficiently robust. More work needs to be done to raise the profile of private fostering, and to ensure that children are given the level of protection and support they need. While the local authority is aware of this and is putting in place a range of actions to improve the situation, there is as yet no impact.
55. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is effective in not only addressing allegations against professionals who work with children but also in raising awareness in schools and other settings of the need for safer working practices.
56. When disabled children are looked after or are the subject of child protection concerns, effective joint working arrangements with specialist teams ensure that their needs are met. Disabled children have access to a good range of support services, including short breaks, a sitting service, after school clubs and holiday schemes. In cases seen by inspectors, the transition from children to adult services was managed effectively.
57. Children and families receive services that are responsive to issues of gender, race, culture and disability. This includes the use of interpreters, liaison with specialist services such as Barnardos' U-Turn trafficking service, and consideration of gender in the allocation of workers.

Key judgement	Judgement grade
The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence	Good
<p>Summary</p> <p>Thresholds for children becoming looked after by the local authority are clear and action is only taken when it is in the child’s best interest.</p> <p>Children live in high quality placements that fit their needs and, where appropriate, they live with their brothers and sisters. They have good relationships with their social workers who see them regularly and listen to them especially when making plans for the future. Independent Reviewing Officers take an active interest in making sure that children get all the help that they need.</p> <p>Most children who are looked after find permanent homes in a timely way. The number of children who are being adopted or placed under Special Guardianship Orders is rising, and these are well planned and undertaken in a timely way.</p> <p>Support for families post adoption is increasing to help placements to succeed.</p> <p>Looked after children are helped to stay healthy and are encouraged to become involved in a range of hobbies and other activities. Although they get good support at school to help them to do well, they do not achieve as well as other pupils, and too many are not in school full time. When children leave care, they have a good range of accommodation available and services to support them, but too many care leavers are not in education, training and employment.</p>	

58. The multi-agency Placement Panel is effective in ensuring that children and young people are not received into care unnecessarily. Over the last three years the number of looked after children has remained stable at just over 300.
59. Children on the edge of care and their families are well supported by a wide range of services. The Multi Systemic Therapy Team provides effective and intensive family support in response to the specific and complex needs of children and young people, including substance misuse, children who go missing, those at risk of CSE and those experiencing domestic violence. Good, purposeful work with children and families is supporting children to return home safely. Only four children who entered the care system in 2013–14 had been in care during the previous 12 months.

60. Children and young people who become looked after do so in a properly assessed and planned way. The quality of core assessments to support social work decisions is good; they are sharply focused on risk and protective factors and the child's voice is clearly heard. Only a small number of children enter the care system through emergency powers. The Public Law Outline (PLO) is used effectively to engage families and achieve permanence early for children, with good quality pre-court proceedings letters and effective use of family group conferences and parallel planning. The quality of social work court reports is good, and is contributing to improved timescales for care proceedings and a reduction from an average of 48 weeks in 2012–13 to 39 weeks in 2013–14. Performance is now close to the national average of 37 weeks.
61. Looked after children enjoy good quality relationships with their social workers. Social workers have manageable caseloads, enabling them to spend time with children. They demonstrate good understanding of their needs, wishes and feelings. This is helping to shape good quality assessments and plans and to improve outcomes for children. Social work practice is sensitive to the specific needs of children, including those with special needs, so that children know and understand what has happened to them. Life story work is completed sensitively and at the child's own pace. However, some looked after children have experienced several changes of social workers in a year; a concern which they have raised through the Children in Care Council (CICC).
62. In March 2014, most looked after children were living in foster care with families. 26 young people lived in residential provision which met their personal needs and circumstances. Many children experience a good level of choice about placements, ensuring that their needs are closely matched. The large majority of them experience a good or better quality of service; nearly all children are placed in services judged good or better through inspection.
63. Children are placed near to the community they come from, making it possible for them to access specialist therapeutic or educational provision or keep in touch with family and friends. Only 38 children and young people are placed more than 20 miles from their home.
64. Social work practice ensures that wherever possible brothers and sisters live together. Of the 36 sibling groups for whom there is a plan for them to live together, only two are not placed with the same family. The stability of short-term placements, particularly for young people aged 16 to 17, has not been good. The local authority is tackling this issue through better targeting of services and more training for foster carers in dealing with challenging behaviour by young people.

65. All looked after children have an up-to-date care plan which helps to ensure that their needs are met. The quality of care plans is improving with many now highlighting a clear, realistic and achievable permanence plan. However, where children are placed away from Portsmouth, their care plans are not always shared with the children's homes in a timely way. The use of independent visitors, who are able to advise, befriend and support children, is low. Currently, only 13 young people have access to an independent visitor, but the position is slowly improving.
66. Good provision is made to ensure that looked after children are helped to understand their rights and legal entitlements. The Pledge made by the local authority is well embedded and represents a public promise to children in care to keep them safe, prepare them for adult life and listen to what they have to say. Feedback from children and young people to a survey organised by the local authority confirms that the Pledge is working well and helping to ensure that children are safe and feel safe in the places where they live. Children and young people are protected, or helped to keep themselves safe from bullying; but the absence of any reports on looked after children who, despite that, do experience bullying or racist incidents, needs to be addressed. The Pledge, which directly refers to CSE, also needs to include reference to the support available for children who go missing from care.
67. The local authority responds to children's and young people's concerns and complaints effectively. The vast majority of complaints are resolved at an early stage. Data from children's surveys show that there is a high level of satisfaction expressed by looked after children regarding the quality of the service they receive (94% in 2014).
68. Too many looked after children enter the criminal justice system. The number who have offended has increased from 8% in 2012 to 12.7% in 2013. To date the authority has not undertaken any work to fully understand this trend and, as a result, there is no strategy in place to deal with it.
69. A clear and effective multi-agency protocol is in place to address the needs of children who go missing from care. Independent return interviews are available to support this group of young people. There is good intelligence sharing between agencies and through the police. Robust action is taken to track young people who go missing from care, both nationally and internationally. Only one young person is missing at the time of the inspection and there was positive activity by partners to establish their whereabouts and safety.

70. Good attention is paid to the health of looked after children: 91% have their dental health assessments on time; 96% have completed a full course of immunisations; 90% had their health assessments within the appropriate timescale; and 100% of under-5s have had their developmental checks. In every case these figures are significantly higher than national averages. Health assessments are good quality and use language which is easily accessible to children and young people. The dedicated CAMHS Looked After Children Team ensures that children and young people have ready access to good quality support, including those placed outside the city.
71. The capacity of the virtual school has been increased with the addition of three new posts, one of whom is leading on early years and another on post-16 provision. An improvement in the proportion of children with an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (PEP) is good and has increased to 92%. Representatives from the virtual school attend all initial PEP meetings, which is good. An effective sampling and auditing process is having a positive impact on the quality of plans, leading to a sharper focus on educational achievement. Pupils in schools outside the city receive the same level of support from the virtual school as children attending schools in Portsmouth. Virtual school staff make strenuous efforts to ensure that for the small number (8) of children receiving less than 25 hours of education per week, the alternative provision is meeting their needs.
72. Despite good levels of support, educational attainment by children who are looked after is variable. The number of children in each cohort is very small, which means that percentages can vary greatly year-on-year, making identification of trends difficult. The proportion of children who are looked after is lower than that found in statistical neighbours, and around two-thirds (69%) of Portsmouth looked after children have a special educational need (SEN). Scrutiny by inspectors of individual children's cases shows that many of the children who sat their GCSEs in 2013 entered care late and had already missed large amounts of schooling. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2 for looked after children in 2013 was 46%, slightly above the national average. Not enough young people made the expected progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 in English or mathematics, and between 2011 and 2013 the progress gap between looked after children and their peers has widened. The local authority's provisional data on progress suggests an improvement in 2014 and 2015. Five 16 year-olds achieved five good GCSEs including English and mathematics which, at 17%, is in line with national averages and above statistical neighbours for looked after children. One third achieved five good GCSEs excluding English and mathematics, which is slightly below the national average but above statistical neighbours.

73. The PEP is being used appropriately to identify individual needs that can be supported through the use of the Pupil Premium, such as one-to-one tuition. The Pupil Premium is also being used to support authority-wide schemes such as an increase in dedicated educational psychologist support and the Letterbox scheme which delivers books and resources to looked after children to encourage learning at home. Looked after children are only ever placed in good or better schools. If a child is attending a school that is not yet good, when they enter care, their education is not unnecessarily disrupted if they are settled and making good progress. However, inspectors also saw examples of appropriate school changes being made if provision was not meeting children's needs. Currently 75% of children are attending schools that are good or better.
74. The virtual school has analysed the intended destinations of the current year 11 pupils in order to be able to continue to track and support their progress. The local authority's data shows that as of 31 March 2014, the proportion of looked after children in education, employment and training is 77%, which is an improvement on the figure of 72% in March 2013 and above the most recently published figure for England as a whole.
75. Support for looked after children to enjoy their leisure time is good. Their individual needs are well supported by schools and through the use of library memberships and leisure cards. Children are engaged in a wide range of activities, such as rugby and football clubs, martial arts, horse riding, swimming and dance, and there are examples of disabled children participating in sport at a national level.
76. Inspectors saw evidence of foster carers being well supported by their family support workers. They have good access to high quality training. Retention of foster carers is good. The local authority's sufficiency strategy places considerable emphasis on supporting the placement of children in families close to their own communities. However, with 14% of looked after children from an ethnic minority background, more effort needs to be made to recruit foster carers who reflect the diversity of the local population.
77. Carers are clear about the arrangements for administering prescribed medication, but a comprehensive scheme of delegated responsibility has yet to be formalised in writing. The absence of clear written guidance is causing uncertainty for some carers.
78. Foster Care Panel decisions are informed by good quality social work assessments and 'second opinion' social work reports. The foster carer approval process is rigorous and decisions are timely. Retention of foster carers is good. The 27 carers who responded to the Fostering Panel Survey in 2013–14 overwhelmingly report a high level of satisfaction with the assessment process and the support they receive. Exemptions to the normal foster care placement regulations are rarely used, and in the last year only four decisions have been made for carers to have more than three children, which demonstrates good commitment to the quality of care provided.

79. Independent reviewing officers (IROs) provide a good service to children and families and are effective in challenging poor practice. Decisions made at reviews are progressed in a timely fashion. If there is evidence of repeated delay, IROs are quick to escalate the issue using the well-established conflict resolution process. Children and young people experience timely reviews of their care arrangements; in 2014 93.5% of child care reviews were completed on time. Mid-term reviews, which go beyond the minimum statutory requirement, are a strong feature of the IRO service and further ensure good tracking of children's progress. In 2014 90% of looked after children participated in their statutory reviews and 75% of parents and carers contributed to them. Children and young people have good access to support so that their views are known and understood. For example, 14 of the 56 children who had a review in May 2014 had an advocate to support them. However, IROs do not routinely meet foster carers before children's reviews, which means that on occasions awkward questions, for example about plans for special guardianship orders (SGOs), are asked in the presence of children. This can create unnecessary tension in the relationships between carers and children. IRO caseloads have been consistently high, averaging 70 plus across the team, higher than the average of 50 to 60 referred to in the IRO handbook. Although this is not impacting directly on the quality of the service, IROs are working long hours which may not be sustainable in the long term.
80. The Children in Care Council (CICC) provides an effective forum in which to share and explore the views of children and young people, and is helping to influence the shape of service provision in key areas, for example by speeding up the process for looked after children to get their holiday allowance. Representation on the CICC reflects the wider looked after population, and the work of this group of children and young people is supported by good and well-established relationships with senior managers. Senior managers know the children well and are effective in championing the needs of looked after children.

The graded judgment for adoption performance is that it is good

81. Adoption is considered early for those children who are unable to return to their family, either because it would be not be safe or because it would not be in their best interests to do so. The permanency panel is effective in ensuring that assessments and plans are progressed in a timely fashion. Parallel planning and good case tracking help to ensure that children experience minimum delay.

82. The timeliness of court proceedings has improved significantly, down from 48 weeks in 2012–13 to 39 weeks in 2013–14, which is now much closer to the national average of 37 weeks. Adoption social workers are proactive in researching potential matches before court authority has been received, to reduce the length of time children have to wait once the placement order has been granted.
83. The time taken to match children with adopters has fallen significantly. Over a three year period between 2010 and 2013, children in Portsmouth waited on average 856 days between entering care and being placed for adoption, significantly longer than the national average of 647 days and statistical neighbour average of 595 days. In 2013–14 the average length of time between children entering care and being placed for adoption had fallen to 583 days. Past performance needs to be set in the context of a local authority which is determined to put children first by persisting with adoption plans for children who, because of their age and/or the complexity of their health needs, are not easy to place.
84. Year on year the number of children achieving permanence, either through adoption or by way of a special guardianship order, has increased from 29 in 2011–2012 to 53 in 2013–2014, of whom 26 were adopted. Although the percentage of children who leave care through adoption is lower than in other authorities, a higher proportion of children leave care to live permanently with a family under a special guardianship arrangement (27 in 2013–2014).
85. Children benefit from Portsmouth’s robust approach to family finding. This includes the proactive use of the Adoption Register, activity days, targeted advertising and discussion in local consortium meetings. Adoption files examined by inspectors demonstrate that social workers have a good understanding of children’s backgrounds, personalities and needs, particularly where complex health and behavioural needs are likely to affect the search for a permanent home.
86. Inspectors observed social workers working sensitively and creatively with children to prepare them for adoption, with evidence of good and effective life story work.
87. The adoption service has developed a good reputation with adopters based on its responsiveness and the level of support provided. Increased marketing and recruitment activity, involving local advertising in newspapers and on buses and interviews on local radio, has led to a steady increase in enquiries. The adoption team know both the adopters and their children well.

88. The Adoption Reform Grant is being used appropriately to strengthen the marketing, recruitment and assessment of, and to increase support to, adopters. It is also being used to significantly increase the capacity of the special guardianship service. In 2014, 37 new adopters were recruited against a target of 35. The preparation, assessment and training of adopters is good. While they are being assessed, adopters are befriended by carefully selected and well-matched buddies who are experienced adopters. For example, same sex couples are matched with experienced couples from a similar background.
89. An effective adoption panel provides robust scrutiny and challenge. Panels are always quorate. Additional panels are convened when urgent decisions are needed in order to progress plans for children. However, the membership of the adoption panel does not reflect the diversity of the local community and there has been an under-investment in training.
90. The quality of medical information available to social workers and adopters is good, although arrangements for adopters to meet the medical advisor as part of the matching process could and should have been introduced sooner. The ethnic profile of adopters does not match the diversity of the local community.
91. The Agency Decision-Maker thoroughly scrutinises and reviews the recommendations made by the adoption panel. However, the way in which decisions are recorded does not always include a detailed explanation of the rationale on which the decision was based. In two cases seen by inspectors there was a short delay in reaching and then confirming the decision, resulting in anxiety for the adopters.
92. Links between carers and the adoption support team are established early and are effectively maintained through newsletters, which include invitations to social events and training. Adoption support is provided via a small but expanding team, which benefits from having access to ring-fenced educational psychology time as well as a spot-purchasing arrangement with an independent therapist. Families receive bespoke packages of support which are not dependent on where they live. The adoption support team is currently involved with 52 families, including ten where a child is subject to a special guardianship arrangement. There have been no adoption disruptions in the past twelve months.
93. Most adoption support plans seen by inspectors were not sufficiently detailed; the description of needs, outcomes and actions was too generalised. This is a missed opportunity to ensure that there is a clear and appropriately individualised record of the kind of support these families might need in future. A new pro forma, introduced to improve the quality of adoption support plans, is beginning to have an impact; inspectors saw evidence of better plans using the new template.

94. In response to the increasing number of children being adopted, the local authority recognises the need to review the way in which post adoption support is planned and delivered in order to be able to keep pace with demand. This will involve working closely with the Clinical Commissioning Group in order to strengthen the provision of child and adolescent mental health services for adoptive and special guardianship families.
95. The use of the information exchange and Letterbox scheme, which is used to exchange information between birth and adoptive families, is well-embedded and effectively coordinated. Arrangements are sensitive to the needs and wishes of birth parents, adopters and children, and are responsive to the latest developments in the use of information technology and social media. The vast majority of later life letters seen by inspectors are good.
96. The local authority receives a steady stream of requests from adopted adults to access their birth records. There is no waiting list and adults are routinely offered an appointment within six weeks.

The graded judgment about the experience and progress of care leavers is that it requires improvement

97. The support that care leavers receive from the Young People's Support Team (YPST) lacks consistency. According to care leavers, the level and quality of the service received very much depends on the individual worker. Care leavers told inspectors about having too many changes of social workers and complained that they often find it difficult to get hold of them. One third of all complaints received by children's social care in 2013–2014 were about the Young People's Support Team.
98. While the vast majority of care leavers have an up-to-date pathway plan, their quality varies considerably. Some are comprehensive and well-considered whilst others are not sufficiently outcome focused and do not provide enough detail about who will do what, and by when. Senior managers are actively addressing shortfalls in the management of the YPST, not least in terms of the frequency and quality of staff supervision, but the pace of change is too slow.
99. Care leavers are appreciative of the support they receive from the BOOST service, a service aimed at helping them to plan and prepare for independence. Using an interactive pack, care leavers are helped to identify the skills they need to be independent, and agree an appropriate package of support. Care leavers talked with great affection about the BOOST workers, who they say are very supportive and helpful.

100. Care leavers are making good use of the multi-agency 'Go for It' project. Based in a setting that is familiar to young people, and with which they feel comfortable, the service offers financial advice, counselling, support with drug and alcohol issues, sexual health support and careers guidance. Care leavers are able to access these services directly.
101. Care leavers have up-to-date medical and dental checks. The looked after children health nurse ensures that every young person receives copies of their health reviews. The final review, completed before the care leaver's 18th birthday, is comprehensive. However, none of the care leavers spoken to by inspectors was aware of having had a copy of their health history.
102. To date 14 care leavers have been enabled to stay put with their foster carers beyond the age of 18. Young people told inspectors that the carers who support them actively encourage them to further their education and/or find suitable employment, but they do not always say the same about their social workers.
103. A specialist worker provides good support for unaccompanied asylum-seeking care leavers, and is responsible for raising awareness of their religious, cultural and other needs, as well as their legal rights. Inspectors saw examples of these young people doing well in their placements, achieving at college and being helped to understand their histories.
104. Too many care leavers are not in education, employment or training (NEET), which represents a significant barrier to them achieving their potential and has implications for their long-term prospects. The adjusted NEET figure for care leavers in Portsmouth is 48.1%, significantly above the national average of 34%. Working with the university and local FE colleges, the local authority is determined to improve care leavers' access to further education. Involvement in the New Belongings project led by the Care Leavers Foundation is providing both a framework and a sharper focus for this activity. Four new apprenticeships within the council have been specifically ring-fenced to care leavers, and agreement has been reached to create a further 14 apprenticeships over the next 12 months. However, few care leavers move on to higher education, with just three young people attending university at the time of the inspection.
105. The vast majority of care leavers are living in suitable accommodation. The multi-agency housing panel, which includes representatives from the youth offending and drug and alcohol service as well as housing providers, is effective in matching young people to housing options. There were no care leavers in bed and breakfast accommodation at the time of this inspection

106. Care leavers told inspectors that they feel safe where they are living, are able to choose from a good range of housing options and that their current accommodation meets their needs. Housing providers told inspectors that the information they receive about young people prior to them moving in is comprehensive. Evictions of care leavers from supported housing are rare.
107. At the time of this inspection there were 7 young people aged 16 or 17 who had been accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 in the preceding 6 months. They are being well supported by the Young People's Support Team. However, local housing providers told inspectors report that some 16 and 17 year-olds who have been assessed as not needing a service from children's social care are too vulnerable to be living independently without support, and that this is having a negative impact on their outcomes.
108. Until recently care leavers were not routinely informed about all their rights and entitlements, including the leaving care grant. A group of care leavers told inspectors that this had left them feeling angry and frustrated. Senior managers have responded by producing a comprehensive leaflet for care leavers which sets out their rights and entitlements.

Key judgement	Judgement grade
Leadership, management and governance	Good
<p>Summary</p> <p>The authority understands the needs of its communities well. This is reflected in coherent and ambitious plans and the way in which services are designed and implemented to provide effective support. Senior managers provide strong leadership and effective management to provide some high quality and sustainable services to children in Portsmouth. They take decisive and appropriate action to address service shortfalls when required. However, some services are not yet good and require greater focus. Elected members are not sufficiently knowledgeable and skilled in understanding their responsibility to properly challenge the work of children’s social care and to act as champions for all looked after children.</p>	

109. Services for children and families are based on good strategic planning and sound partnership working. The seven key priorities set out by the Children’s Trust are rooted in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and are closely aligned to the work of the Portsmouth Health and Wellbeing Board. With clear plans and good multi-agency collaboration, progress against each of the priorities is monitored effectively, resulting in the development of services which are having a positive impact. For example, as a result of the monitoring of the successful work undertaken by the Family Nurse Partnership to support vulnerable parents and their babies and young children, this service has been enhanced through additional funding from the authority. There is a shared strategic commitment by the council and partner agencies to provide early intervention in order to ensure that children and young people receive the right help at the right time. The establishment of the JAT and the increased use of the CAF have been instrumental in making early help a reality, although the understanding of thresholds with social work services needs to be clarified.
110. The Director of Children’s Services also acts as Director of Adult Services. Having robustly risk assessed the combined role; the authority reviews the arrangement annually to make sure that it is effective. The Director is a member of the LSCB and has a close working relationship with the Chief Executive of the council, which helps to ensure that the needs of children are properly prioritised.
111. The role of the Lead Member for Children’s Services is clear. He chairs the Children’s Trust and the Corporate Parenting Board and is an observer on the LSCB. Although a children’s service scrutiny committee is in place, it has insufficient focus on the work of children’s social care. At the time of the inspection, the work plan for this committee for the year 2014–15 did not include any areas from children’s social care or associated activity.

112. The training provided to help elected members develop a clear understanding of their duties as corporate parents, is not sufficiently rigorous. Although there is cross-party membership of the Corporate Parenting Board, the importance of the role of the elected members in acting as a champion as part of their responsibilities for looked after children is not properly developed. Formal training is available for new members, but there is no update or refresher training available to ensure that members are kept up to date with changes in their role. Where political differences occur between elected members, the best interests of looked after children as a group are sometimes compromised. Overall, the knowledge and understanding of elected members is not sufficiently developed to ensure that they can give high quality critical challenge and scrutiny of the work of children's social care or act as effective corporate parents.
113. Senior managers know their services well, are committed to continuous improvement and are taking concerted action to raise standards and improve outcomes for children and young people. The authority is outward-looking and is good at inviting external scrutiny to ensure that the services are effective, for example by commissioning a voluntary agency to explore the potential for closer collaboration with neighbouring adoption services.
114. Although not all services are good, the authority has taken decisive action when shortfalls have been identified. Prior to the inspection, and having recognised deficits in their services to care leavers, the authority chose to become part of the government-led 'New Belongings' initiative in order to improve services to these young people by providing increased focus and challenge to their work. Following a review of care services, the local authority is in the process of addressing the gap in provision between high intensive support in residential homes and low level support for young people in shared accommodation. The adoption of the Social Work Matters programme is having a positive impact on improving practice and outcomes for children and young people. A Principal Social Worker has been in post for a year and this role is beginning to show an impact on improving practice and increasing the stability of the workforce.
115. Good quality assurance systems are well established. Managers at all levels within social work services carry out regular monthly case file audits around themes determined by senior managers including, for example, the timeliness of strategy discussions/S47 enquiries, the quality of assessment work, children missing or at risk of sexual exploitation and children/young people who attend alternative education or who are on a part-time timetable. In 2013–2104, 198 audits were completed and findings used to improve practice. For example, the quality of reports to child protection conferences has improved in response to concerns identified through the audit process.

116. The work of the two multi-agency teams which are managed within children's social care are not subject to the same quality assurance process and, as a result, the quality of this work is less well understood. Management oversight at an operational level is evident on case files, and workers feel that they receive effective direction from managers. However, as the authority itself recognises, this is not always well recorded nor sufficiently focused on ensuring improved outcomes for children and young people.
117. Performance management is effective. Regular reports on key areas, including the timeliness of work and regularity of staff supervision, are used effectively at both a strategic and operational level to monitor activity and address areas of underperformance. All assessments, for example, that exceed internal completion times are subject to 'exception reporting' processes so that the reasons for delay are properly understood.
118. In some limited areas of work, there is inconsistent recording of data. As part of the inspection process, inspectors had difficulty in gaining accurate information about the number of care leavers and children missing from education.
119. Joint commissioning is well established in Portsmouth, and has recently been enhanced by the creation of a jointly funded integrated commissioning unit. Commissioning activity is clearly aligned to the strategic planning process and overseen by chief officers to ensure effectiveness. Where necessary, commissioners work with other authorities to achieve economies of scale or a wider choice of provider, for example collaborating with an adjacent authority to provide services to children at risk of sexual exploitation. Feedback from service users is used well to inform the design and development of new services. Regular forums have been established with members of the voluntary sector to encourage them to participate in the commissioning process and extend the choice of services available.
120. Workforce development for social work staff is an area of real strength. As part of the Social Work Matters initiative, caseloads have been reduced so that most workers have between 15 and 18 cases. This has been achieved through an increase in social work posts and by moving some less operational posts to frontline services. Additionally, the number of administrative posts has been increased to enable social workers to spend more time working directly with children and families. There has been a reduction in the turnover of staff. At the time of the inspection, out of an establishment of 142 qualified social workers, just one post was unfilled. Agency staff are only used to cover short term vacancies.

121. Information from exit interviews undertaken has been used well to improve the social work 'offer' to staff and strengthen retention. Discussions with Portsmouth University are leading to the development of a social work academy in the authority. It will open in autumn 2014 and provide enhanced learning opportunities for social workers at the beginning of their careers. A range of training and development is available both internally and through the LSCB. Social workers were able to demonstrate to inspectors the impact of the recent introduction of reflective supervision on their work. However, there is no training plan for the JAT or sufficient monitoring of the training undertaken by workers to ensure that they have the core skills to undertake their roles effectively.
122. The importance of corporate parenting is recognised within the authority. The corporate parenting strategy is based on feedback from children and young people. It is written in an accessible style and makes clear commitments to improving their life chances. The corporate parenting board has a diverse membership including the Chief Executive, elected members, young people, carers and key partners. It provides both a forum to challenge officers and one to improve services.
123. The local authority listens to service users and has comprehensive systems in place to ensure that their experiences inform improvements in the development and delivery of service. Surveys are used to elicit regular feedback and there is a strong parent and carer board.
124. Complaints are managed well by a designated complaints manager. Learning from complaints is cascaded to managers and has resulted in changes in practice, for example, through providing better information for children coming into care. Learning from serious case reviews is disseminated effectively. Reflective incident reviews are increasingly used as a tool to understand critical incidents and improve practice.
125. The authority works well with the local family justice board to improve court processes and take forward national initiatives. The work of the board is properly disseminated within the local authority so that workers understand and can prepare for changes in practice. Working relationships with Cafcass and the family courts are strong, and have resulted in a significant reduction in the time taken to complete care proceedings.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)

The Local Safeguarding Children Board 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.

Summary of findings

The Local Safeguarding Children Board is good because:

126. Robust governance arrangements ensure that the Board meets its statutory responsibilities with membership at the appropriate seniority.
127. The four priorities identified by the Board are appropriate, and the Board's Business Plan demonstrates how those priorities will be met.
128. The Section 11 audit, Compact, is well established and the quality assurance of the process is good.
129. The Board uses a comprehensive multi-agency data set to routinely scrutinise and evaluate frontline performance.
130. The process for commissioning serious case reviews is set out appropriately in a detailed procedure, and all actions arising from recommendations of the most recent serious case review are complete.
131. The Board receives regular information about young people at risk and the CSE sub-committee, chaired by the police, leads strategic developments.
132. Routine and bespoke, internally commissioned multi-agency audits, along with analysis of data, inform and influence the focus of improvement activity.
133. The PSCB and Children's Trust threshold document is clear and widely disseminated. Child protection policies and procedures are good and regularly reviewed.
134. Appropriate multi-agency training is provided to all agencies. Take up is good with low rates of non-attendance.
135. The Learning and Improvement Framework is comprehensive and is underpinned by the thorough scrutiny and challenge of annual reports from key agencies such as CDOP, MARAC and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

What does the LSCB need to improve?

Priority and immediate action

136. No areas were identified for immediate improvement.

Areas for improvement

137. Robustly impress upon key agencies the need to rapidly improve the systemised collection and collation of comprehensive data about missing children. Further, ensure that partners work together to improve practice with children missing and fully understand the local situation.
138. Develop and implement a narrative analysis of performance to support the multi-agency data set so that there is a shared understanding within the partnership about trends in performance.
139. Develop and implement evaluation of multi-agency training on front line practice to ensure that it meets the desired outcomes.
140. Work with partners to improve the quality of recommendations from audit activity to ensure that findings are better used to influence practice improvements.

The LSCB's strengths

141. Partners value the strong leadership of the Board, which enables them to take full responsibility for the contribution and role of their individual agencies.
142. The recruitment of three young adults as lay members is making a positive contribution to the work of the Board.
143. The Chair is committed to ensuring that members understand front line practice, and to this end every Board member observes one child protection case conference annually.
144. Reconfiguring of the sub-structure of the Board has led to greater clarity of purpose, a more coherent approach and better communication between the sub-committees.
145. A healthy culture of challenge and being challenged is now in place.
146. A Protocol for Resolving Professional Differences has been developed and implemented in order to raise practitioner and manager confidence in challenging and negotiating areas of disagreement.

147. Scrutiny and awareness of children placed outside the local authority forms a routine part of the quarterly dataset.
148. Training courses are planned in such a way as to take forward learning from audits, for instance to better prepare professionals to contribute to case conferences.
149. Specific work, including training, with volunteers and staff from Madrasahs and Faith schools is successful in increasing their understanding of and engagement with the safeguarding agenda.
150. A strong and well developed approach to e-Safety led by the Board has ensured that awareness amongst children in the city is high.

Inspection judgement about the LSCB

151. The last year has seen much improvement in the Board's effectiveness. The new independent Chair, in conjunction with the business manager, has significantly accelerated progress. Membership is at the appropriate seniority to enable the PSCB to drive forward its key priorities and the wider safeguarding agenda. Partners value the strong leadership of the Board, which enables them to take full responsibility for the contribution and role of their individual agencies. The recruitment of three young adults as lay members represents a positive addition to the Board. The Chair is committed to ensuring that members understand front line practice, and to this end every Board member observes one child protection case conference annually.
152. A good quality constitution clearly sets out robust governance arrangements, ensuring that the Board meets its statutory responsibilities. Regular meetings take place between the PSCB chair, the DCS and Chief Executive. Within the Board there is a healthy culture of challenge and being challenged. After partners questioned the style and content of the CDOP annual report, the Board now receives pertinent data presented more clearly.
153. The combination of a sharp focus and strong collaborative partnership has resulted in four appropriate priorities that are in alignment with those of the Children's Trust and the Health and Wellbeing Board. The Board's Business Plan demonstrates how priorities will be met within a refocused and sharper style of planning. Significant actions in respect of neglect and early help are included to ensure continued improvements in front line practice.
154. The new Chair and business manager have successfully led a programme to reconfigure the sub-structure of the Board. This had led to greater clarity of purpose, a more coherent approach and better communication between the sub-committees. A wide range of partners chair sub-committees, ensuring that ownership of the wider safeguarding agenda is shared.

155. The Section 11 audit, Compact, is well established and the vast majority of agencies submit a completed return. Quality assurance of the process is good. For example, moderation visits are carried out where a self-assessment is exceptionally positive or where concerns are identified. Whilst data collected is extensive, there is no accompanying narrative or analysis, and the Board acknowledges the need to develop one to maximise learning and engagement across partners.
156. A well-established multi-agency data set provides a good platform for the Board to routinely scrutinise and evaluate frontline performance. Measures reported on are appropriate and include information about CAF and early help. Partners acknowledge that the Board's analytical commentary requires further development to be fully useful. Scrutiny and awareness of children placed outside the local authority forms a routine part of the quarterly dataset. A good and thorough multi-agency audit of 19 cases that went to child protection conference demonstrated the Board's commitment to follow through and review the effectiveness of changes to practice. The PSCB and Children's Trust threshold document is clear and widely disseminated but more needs to be done to ensure that all agencies fully understand the thresholds for services. Child protection policies and procedures are good and regularly reviewed. Most are shared with the 4LSCB, an alliance of local safeguarding children boards.
157. The process for commissioning serious case reviews is set out appropriately in a detailed procedure that has been agreed by Board members. No notifications of serious incidents have been made to Ofsted in 2013–2014. The most recent serious case review was published in September 2013 and all actions arising from recommendations are complete. The use of learning is good and evidenced by the commissioning of experts in the field to lead a conference on neglect for all front line practitioners. In addition, a Protocol for Resolving Professional Differences has been developed and implemented in order to raise practitioner and manager confidence in challenging and negotiating areas of disagreement.
158. The PSCB has been instrumental in overseeing the development and implementation of a good child sexual exploitation strategy, with associated assessment and intervention tools. The Board receives regular information about young people at risk, and the CSE sub-committee, chaired by the police, leads strategic developments. Frontline services are now more accurately identifying those most at risk and intelligence pathways are working well. Partners acknowledge that work must continue to ensure that all practitioners across the city are appropriately trained and made aware of the issues.

159. The Board receives basic data about numbers of children missing from home and care. An operational group involving representatives from children's social care and the police routinely shares intelligence about, and co-ordinates protective action in response to, children and young people at risk of CSE. However, the collection and analysis of data collected by the police and children's social care is not centrally held, collated or tracked. This means that the Board is not receiving sufficiently comprehensive information to assure themselves that issues are fully understood and that appropriate action is being taken to minimise risks to young people.
160. A strong and well developed approach to e-Safety led by the Board has ensured that awareness amongst children in the city is high. 'Beware of Lurking Trolls' is a very good and imaginative initiative borne out of research commissioned by the Board in conjunction with the youth parliament and University of Portsmouth. The project targets a wide range of children, engaging them through the use of a professionally published book and a rolling programme of workshops. Schools are fully engaged and to date over 3,000 children have taken part in a Trolls workshop.
161. The Learning and Improvement Framework is comprehensive and is underpinned by the thorough scrutiny and challenge of annual reports from key agencies such as CDOP, MARAC and the Health and Wellbeing Board. Routine and bespoke commissioned multi-agency audits, along with analysis of data, inform and influence the focus of improvement activity. A well-established forward planner schedules multi-agency audits and 'deep dive' reviews. However, one deep dive, which looked at children subject to second and subsequent CP plans, made overly generalised recommendations and it is not clear how any changes to practice will be accurately evaluated. The PSCB has commissioned qualitative independent research into children's and families' experience of the child protection system. Recommendations have been acted on, for example parents are now supported by the provision of child care and transport to conferences if required.
162. Appropriate multi-agency training is provided to all agencies. Take up is good with low rates of non-attendance. Both core and specialist training courses are offered and each is geared toward particular workforce groups. Training courses are planned in such a way as to take forward learning from audits, for instance to better prepare professionals to contribute to case conferences. Specific work, including training, with volunteers and staff from Madrasahs and Faith schools is successful in increasing their understanding of and engagement with the safeguarding agenda. However, systematic evaluation to assess the impact of training is not yet in place.
163. The annual report for 2013–14 is not yet available. It is due to be published in September 2014. The 2012–13 annual report sets out the Board's assessment of its strengths and areas for improvement but is not sufficiently rigorous. Neither the style nor content of the 2012–2013 report reflect the improved approach to planning demonstrated in the most recent business plan.

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.

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.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have 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 the inspectors have tried to understand 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: Nigel Parkes

Deputy Lead inspector: Karen McKeown

Team inspectors: Penny Fisher, Gary Lamb, Stephanie Murray, Dominic Porter-Moore, Lynn Radley, Dominic Stevens

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Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD
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