

Surrey County Council

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

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The overall judgement is that children’s services are inadequate

There are widespread and serious failures that potentially leave children at risk of harm. Leaders and managers have not been able to demonstrate sufficient understanding of failures and have been ineffective in prioritising, challenging and making improvements.

It is Ofsted’s expectation that, as a minimum, all children and young people receive good help, care and protection.¹

The judgements on areas of the service that contribute to overall effectiveness are:

1. Children who need help and protection	Inadequate
2. Children looked after and achieving permanence	Requires Improvement
2.1 Adoption performance	Good
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Requires Improvement
3. Leadership, management and governance	Inadequate

¹ A full description of what the inspection judgements mean can be found at the end of this report.

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Summary of findings

Children's services in Surrey County Council are inadequate because:

Leadership, management and governance

- The local authority is not adequately discharging its statutory duty to children in need. The practice of stepping down cases to universal and targeted services has led to the authority failing to provide a range and level of services to safeguard and promote children's and young people's welfare. A significant number of children in need are not receiving the level of support and monitoring necessary to ensure their welfare and protection.
- Strategic leaders failed to foresee the impact of the major transformation of children services in March 2014, which led to children in need not being afforded social care support unless they qualified for a specialist statutory service as a looked after child or as a child in need of protection. This decision had far-reaching consequences for a significant number of vulnerable children and young people, some of whom were at known or potential risk of child sexual exploitation.
- Inspectors found managers did not routinely rigorously challenge social work practice, including the poor quality of children in need work.
- Senior managers do not have sufficient oversight of front line practice and were not fully aware of the extent of the failings in services for children in need which were identified during this inspection.
- The service arrangements for children and young people at known or potential risk of child sexual exploitation are underdeveloped and do not provide for a coordinated response to adequately support or protect this vulnerable group of young people.
- Strategic managers have not been able to demonstrate sufficient understanding of failures in services to children at risk of child sexual exploitation. Inspectors identified that in 13 of the 17 cases seen which related to risk associated with child sexual exploitation, children did not benefit from a co-ordinated response, and alerts to risk factors were not being fully identified or responded to effectively.
- There is a lack of clear strategic leadership in the provision of services for children who go missing from care or home. This results in children and young people in the care of the local authority not routinely being seen by an independent person following their safe return.

Quality of practice

- Children and young people in the care of the local authority who go missing are not routinely offered an interview with an independent person following their

return.

- Operational management oversight of front line practice is poor. This results in weak decision-making, reflected in a significant number of children in need cases being inappropriately stepped down without sufficient regard to risk, assessed need or the history of the case.
- Inspectors found managers did not routinely rigorously challenge social work practice, including the absence or overall poor quality of child in need plans.
- Some cases are not allocated to workers and are inappropriately held by assistant team managers, which leads to delay and inactivity in meeting children's assessed needs in progressing plans.
- The pace of change in making progress against a number of key areas for development identified in previous inspections has been slow and much remains to be done to improve the quality of front line practice.

What does the local authority need to improve?

Priority and immediate action

Leadership, management and governance

1. Undertake an immediate review of unallocated cases held by assistant team managers and ensure that these children receive appropriate services.
2. Review all cases stepped down to team around the family service and targeted services since the reconfiguration in March 2014 and take necessary action to ensure that these children are safe and receiving appropriate services.
3. Review all cases where children have been identified as at risk of child sexual exploitation and ensure services are in place to minimise risk and provide effective support.
4. Review the early help, multi-agency levels of need to ensure that children receive the required level of support and protection based on need and risk.
5. Review the management, effectiveness and accountability arrangements of the missing and exploited children's conference (MAECC) to support a coordinated response across the partnership.
6. Ensure that when children return after going missing from care they are offered a visit by an independent person to explore the reason they went missing, and that suitable plans are put in place to help keep them safe.

Management oversight of quality of practice

7. Ensure that children assessed as in need can access an appropriate range of support services, including, support and intervention by qualified and experienced social workers. Ensure that all children in need have plans and that the quality of plans supports purposeful intervention.
8. Ensure the effectiveness of management oversight within the referral, assessment and intervention service (RAIS) so that poor practice is consistently identified and challenged.
9. Ensure that core groups effectively develop and monitor the delivery of child protection plans in meeting children's needs and in reducing risk
10. Improve the timeliness and quality of assessments to inform analysis, planning and intervention.
11. Ensure that chronologies are fit for purpose and are updated to reflect the history of individual cases to inform assessment, including risk assessment, and planning for children and young people.

Areas for improvement

Training

12. Ensure that professionals, including partners, who work with children who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation have the necessary skills to recognise risk factors and to act effectively on alerts to risk.

Assessment and care planning for looked after children

13. Review the level of risk to children who have been on child protection plans for more than 18 months to establish the impact of current intervention, including the effective management of risk.
14. Improve the consistency of planning for children where the decision is for them to become looked after, so that delay is avoided.
15. Improve service planning through the clear analysis of trends in adoption and special guardianship orders.
16. Implement the draft recruitment strategy for adoption, to strengthen further the current provision of adoption placements to meet local need.
17. Increase the timely use of family group conferences in planning for permanence, so that all suitable family and friends are considered earlier in the assessment process.

18. Improve the quality of assessments and plans, including pathway plans, so that they consistently identify need and clearly specify actions and timescales.
19. Improve the timeliness and quality of health assessments for looked after children.
20. Ensure that all looked after children have good quality personal education plans which reflect children's views and academic goals for the future.

Care leavers

21. Increase the number of care leavers over the age of 19 who participate in education, employment or training.
22. Ensure that all care leavers have access to their health history so that they are able to manage their own health in the future.

Performance information

23. Improve the arrangements for joint working in the identification, collation and analysis of performance information relating to children missing from care and home and at risk of child sexual exploitation, so that the local authority can effectively use information across the partnership to drive improvement.
24. Improve understanding of the profile of children who are home educated, including those with a history of social care involvement.

Review of Principal Social Worker Role

25. Review the arrangements for the Principal Social Worker position to ensure its independent function and effectiveness.

The local authority's strengths

26. The children in care council is an active group of young people who benefit from a range of activities and whose contribution to developing services which affect their lives is valued and positively responded to by leaders and councillors.
27. Family finding is a strength of the adoption service, and priority is given to securing the most suitable permanence option to meet children's needs. Workers are committed and determined to secure adoption, and use a range of family finding activities. Brothers and sisters are placed together wherever possible.
28. The Extended Hours team undertakes effective edge-of-care work with children aged 10 to 15. Last year, the service worked with 224 children, of whom only 18 became looked after.

29. As part of Surrey County Council's troubled families' initiative, intensive support to families is provided through the family support programme (FSP). This had worked with 858 families and successfully 'turned around' 412 of these as of 31st March 2014.
30. Inspectors saw good consideration being given to children's and young people's culture, ethnicity, disability and gender in work with families. Positive use is made of interpreting services to support families where English is not their first language.
31. The support for care leavers to access higher education is good and the local authority funds university fees and accommodation where necessary.
32. The authority's staying put policy is well developed, and young people are effectively encouraged to stay with their foster carers where possible. This supports young people in making the transition to early adulthood and independence.

Progress since the last inspection

33. The last Ofsted inspection of Surrey County Council services for looked after children was in September 2010. The local authority was judged to be adequate. While progress has been made in a number of areas identified in the previous looked after children inspection, some recommendations still need to be addressed. These include the need for care leavers to have access to their health histories and the need to improve the quality of children's personal education plans.
34. The adoption service remains good and this ensures that children for whom adoption is in their best interest are appropriately identified and placed.
35. The last inspection of Surrey County Council's arrangements for the protection of children was in September 2012. The local authority was judged to be adequate. This inspection has identified serious and widespread weakness in services to children in need. This reflects a marked deterioration in some areas of development identified at the last child protection inspection, in particular in assessment, planning and intervention for children in need.
36. The local authority has made considerable efforts to improve the early help offer, underpinned by an early help strategy and a model of intervention, supported across the partnership. However, this inspection found serious weaknesses in the provision of services to children in need following the implementation of the early help model.
37. The pace of change in making progress against a number of key areas of development identified in previous inspections has been slow and much remains to be done to improve the quality of front line practice. The local

authority attributes the slow pace to work with partners, such as Health, to re-commission some services.

Summary for children and young people

- When professionals are worried about children, they know who to contact so that children and families who have serious problems receive the help they need.
- Many children and young people do not benefit from the right help and support, and some children were found to be at potential risk of harm.
- The council is not providing help and support to all children and young people assessed as having complex needs, or those who are at potential risk of sexual exploitation. Inspectors found that this is a serious problem.
- When children and young people cannot live with their family, the right decisions are made about where they should live. The council works very hard to find children a permanent family if they cannot return home.
- Children develop trusting relationships with adults who care for them and whom they get to know well.
- Social workers regularly visit children in care and listen to their views. They work hard to help children know why they are looked after so that they can understand their experiences.
- Inspectors found that the adoption and family finding teams are very successful in providing support to children, most of whom are happy with their new families. Social workers work very hard to keep brothers and sisters together when this is right for them.
- Most children in care attend good schools, but they do not always have the support they need to do as well as they should in their exams.
- Most children have an up-to-date personal education plan, but their views are not always shown in their plan and actions and goals are not specific enough.
- Some looked after young people frequently go missing, and this can place them in potentially harmful situations. When a young person returns they are not always provided with the chance to speak with an independent person about the reasons why they have been missing. It is important that this happens so that the reasons for going missing are understood and the right support is put in place.
- Senior managers and managers from other agencies need to do more to improve arrangements to monitor young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation, so that they receive the right level of help and support to keep them safe.
- Some young people leaving care in Surrey told inspectors that their plans felt rushed and that they needed more time to consider their options. Plans are not always clear.
- Most care leavers have access to safe accommodation, education and apprenticeship opportunities. The local authority supports a high number of care

leavers at university.

- Most care leavers are registered with a doctor and a dentist, but they are not always given information about their health history when they leave care.
- Senior managers and councillors in Surrey County Council are very committed to helping children and their families. This commitment is shown in how senior managers give priority to services for children and their families. However, inspectors found that senior leaders did not know about the weaknesses in some services, where children and young people were not receiving the right support.
- Senior officers and councillors demonstrate considerable knowledge and understanding of the needs of looked after children and care leavers. These adults have important responsibilities and are very committed to helping to make sure that children and young people in care get the right help and support.

Information about this local authority area²

Children living in this area

- Approximately 246,600 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in Surrey. This is 22% of the total population in the area.
- Approximately 10% of the local authority's children are living in poverty.
- The proportion of children entitled to free school meals:
 - in primary schools is 9% (the national average is 18%)
 - in secondary schools is 7% (the national average is 15%).
- Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 13% of all children living in the area, compared with 22% in the country as a whole.
- The largest minority ethnic groups of children and young people in the area are Asian and mixed.
- The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language:
 - in primary schools is 12% (the national average is 18%)
 - in secondary schools is 9% (the national average is 14%).
- A large traveller and Eastern European population seeks seasonal work in the agricultural parts of the county, but is not resident.

Child protection in this area

- At 31 March 2014, 4,538 children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist children's service. This is a reduction from 5,116 at 31 March 2013.
- At 31 March 2014, 925 children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan. This is an increase from 890 at 31 March 2013.
- At 31 March 2014, 10 children lived in a privately arranged fostering placement. This is an increase from 9 at 31 March 2013.

Children looked after in this area

- At 31 March 2014, 793 children were being looked after by the local authority (a rate of 31 per 10,000 children). This is a reduction from 831 (33 per 10,000 children) at 31 March 2013. Of this number:

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.

- 344 (or 43.4%) live outside the local authority area
 - 76 live in residential children’s homes, of whom 32% live out of the authority area
 - 22 live in residential special schools³, of whom 90% live out of the authority area
 - 594 live with foster families, of whom 44% live out of the authority area
 - 5 live with parents, of whom 20% live out of the authority area
 - 72 children are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- In the last 12 months:
- there have been 59 adoptions
 - 66 children became subjects of special guardianship orders
 - 419 children ceased to be looked after, of whom 2.4% subsequently returned to be looked after
 - 14 children and young people ceased to be looked after and moved on to independent living
 - 41 children and young people ceased to be looked after and are now living in houses of multiple occupation.

Other Ofsted inspections

- The previous inspection of the local authority adoption services in June 2011 judged the service as good.
- The previous inspection of the local authority fostering service in February 2011 judged the service as good.
- The local authority operates nine children’s homes. Seven were judged to be good or outstanding in their most recent Ofsted inspection and two were judged to be adequate.
- The previous inspections of services for looked after children in September 2010 judged services as adequate
- The previous inspection of child protection services in September 2012 judged services as adequate.

Other information about this area

- The Director of Children’s Services has been in post since April 2011.
- The chair of the LSCB has been in post since September 2011.

³ These are residential special schools that look after children for 295 days or less per year.

Inspection judgements about the local authority

Key judgement	Judgement grade
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Inadequate
<p>Summary</p> <p>The local authority is failing in its statutory duty under section 17 of the Children Act 1989; children and young people in need are not being adequately supported or helped.</p> <p>During this inspection, a number of cases were identified where there were serious concerns about management oversight, decision-making, assessment and interventions with children and young people. In some instances, robust action had not been taken to protect children and decision-making did not sufficiently take into account the history of the case.</p> <p>Inspectors found that the threshold for statutory assessment and intervention was not always effectively applied across services and that the response to some young people going missing lacked urgency.</p> <p>In a number of cases held at the 'team around the child' (early help) level, risk was not appropriately assessed, identified or managed and a multi-agency statutory response was absent. This left children and young people at actual and potential risk. The authority failed in some cases to fully recognise weaknesses in practice raised by inspectors.</p> <p>Inspectors identified a number of unallocated cases open to assistant team managers which did not have the active social work involvement they required.</p> <p>In the majority of cases where the plan was for the case to step down to team around the family, inspectors found that management oversight was poor, risks to children were not adequately identified or managed and plans to close some cases were inappropriate.</p> <p>Where children and young people are referred to children's services and identified as needing immediate protection, they receive help quickly to ensure that they are safe. Thresholds are consistently applied within the multi-agency assessment safeguarding hub (MASH).</p> <p>Initial children in need plans are often poor or absent, and progress to improve the quality of plans is slow. Plans do not routinely reflect changes in the child or young person's circumstances, including escalating risk. Plans are not specific enough about what needs to change, so progress is difficult to identify.</p> <p>The arrangements for identifying and reducing risk in child sexual exploitation cases are underdeveloped. Too many children and young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation are not receiving an appropriate or co-ordinated response. Some professionals demonstrated a lack of understanding of the potential links between</p>	

missing episodes and child sexual exploitation; consequently, alerts and escalating risk factors are not always effectively identified or monitored.

The arrangements for supporting children who go missing from home or care are inadequate. When children and young people go missing, they are not always offered a return interview to ensure that they are safe and have not experienced harm. Effective plans and risk assessments to support young people and help to reduce further missing episodes are not routinely formulated.

Where children and young people are referred to children's services and identified as needing immediate protection, they receive help quickly to ensure that they are safe. Thresholds are consistently applied within the multi-agency assessment safeguarding hub (MASH). However, core groups are not effective in reviewing and updating child protection plans.

The extended hours services provide effective support to children and families.

38. The early help strategy for 2013 - 2017 was developed in collaboration with partners, sets out the local authority agreed priorities and was taken into account in designing the restructure. The strategy is underpinned by an early help levels-of-need threshold document. In March 2014, the revised early help strategy led to a restructuring of children's services, and resulted in the closure of long-term children in need teams across the county and the establishment of the referral, assessment and intervention service (RAIS).
39. This has led to a significant number of children in need not receiving an adequate service, with the impact of potential risks to their safety not being properly considered. Inspectors referred 13 cases back to the authority because of serious issues of concern about individual children and young people whose needs for support and protection were not being adequately met, including cases which were inappropriately stepped down. This serious failing resulted in children in need not receiving services commensurate with their individual assessed needs, including their need for protection.
40. Of the 45 team around the family (TAF) cases sampled on this inspection, 17 were found to have been inappropriately stepped down to TAF arrangements. These included cases of children and young people at risk of child sexual exploitation and others where there was known high-risk domestic abuse within the household. The council has not adequately discharged its statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of these children and to ensure the provision of a range and level of services appropriate to those needs under section 17 of Children Act 1989.
41. While some services monitor outcomes when cases have been stepped down, the absence of a single system to monitor the outcomes for children once they step down to team around the family (TAF) or targeted services means that the outcome for these vulnerable children and young people is not known. This is a serious omission.

42. Inspectors identified 29 unallocated cases held by assistant team managers which did not have active social work involvement. In some of these cases children were not seen or receiving the social work support they required; in others the work undertaken had been insufficient or of poor quality. The recommendation for closure in some cases was inappropriate and did not provide for a multi-agency plan to address the needs and risks of children. This potentially left children at risk of harm.
43. Where children and young people are referred to children's services and are identified as in need of immediate protection they receive help quickly to ensure that they are safe. Thresholds are consistently applied within the multi-agency assessment safeguarding hub (MASH). All the cases seen by inspectors in the MASH were appropriately triaged, with clear recording of information gathered. Management oversight and direction in the MASH was prompt and appropriate, with clear rationale for decisions and actions required. Strategy meetings are prompt and effective in most cases.
44. The MASH does not routinely collate information and intelligence on the prevalence of themes relating to domestic abuse, parental mental health issues, or substance and alcohol misuse. Similarly, information is not collated on missing children and young people and child sexual exploitation. This is a missed opportunity to ensure that service development is informed by accurate needs analysis.
45. The response to referrals within area teams is prompt and intervention is timely, but the quality of some referrals received from partners is variable and some were poor. The authority has very recently made some progress in reducing the number of re-referrals, but this improvement is not yet sustained and the re-referral rate remains high. In a number of cases seen by inspectors, children had been subject to multiple referrals for the same reason, indicating that previous decision-making, assessments and interventions had not been effective.
46. Pathways to assess the needs of children in need within the referral, assessment and intervention service (RAIS) established in March 2014 are not consistently or effectively implemented. This has resulted in a process whereby children in need who have been assessed, but who do not require a specialist service such as child protection or looked after children provision, are frequently and inappropriately stepped down to team around the family (TAF).
47. In a significant number of cases seen by inspectors, child and family assessments prior to step down were weak and were not supported by plans for children in line with the local protocol. Practice was not effectively overseen by managers to ensure that the decision to step down was appropriate and the rationale for the decision was clear.
48. Cases inappropriately managed at team around the family level do not have individual plans for each child in a family. This means that changes in individual

children's experiences and circumstances, including escalating risk, are potentially not identified or managed. Cases where there is potential risk to children living in neglectful households, or where there is ongoing domestic abuse, parental mental ill-health or substance misuse, are not being effectively managed and these children are not receiving the right level of support. The early help model of intervention does not provide a framework for systematically tracking and monitoring cases stepped down to TAF, and the outcome of interventions for these children is not known.

49. Most case records include a chronology. However, in many cases this was not up to date, detailed enough or used within the assessment process to inform risk assessments and planning for children. Significant information about potential risks was not considered in some cases seen, so that decisions made were not fully informed. The poor quality of chronologies was identified by the local authority's own audits in April-May 2014. Inspectors saw little evidence of how learning from the authority's own audits is being applied in practice.
50. Not all children in need being supported by the RAIS have plans. The majority of plans seen required improvement and some were poor and did not reflect clear actions or purposeful work with children. Consequently, the majority of plans did not result in suitable intervention or positive change and did not provide an effective means of measuring changes made against objectives set. The consequence of this for children and young people is a potential risk of delay and drift in improving their circumstances.
51. For disabled children, inspectors identified positive joint working across the disabled children's teams and child protection teams, which ensured that children and young people were effectively protected while benefiting from specialist knowledge about their disability.
52. The timeliness of initial child protection conferences reflects an improving picture, from a low base of 42.8% in 2012–2013 to 71.8% in 2013–14, which is above the England average. Social work reports to child protection conferences are of satisfactory quality, with some good examples seen. Social work reports are shared with parents in good time before child protection conferences; they are thorough and identify key risk factors. However, some plans do not include timescales for all actions.
53. Neglect is one of the most prevalent categories of abuse for children subject to child protection plans in the council, as of 31 March 2014. While there is evidence of audit activity around neglect, impact is not yet demonstrated. In some cases seen, inspectors identified drift where children had been subject to child protection plans for over two years and where chronic neglect was a significant feature.
54. The proportion of children remaining subject to child protection plans for longer than two years is currently 7%, which is above the national average. Inspectors

saw some cases where pre-proceedings processes should have been used to drive forward progress more swiftly.

55. Core group meetings are held regularly, but minutes are not always recorded. Inspectors found that core groups do not sufficiently develop the child protection plan, which means that objectives are not always clear enough to support effective monitoring of progress. Partner agencies and family members routinely attend meetings. Some parents who spoke with inspectors said that they understood what they needed to do to make changes, while others were less clear. Some parents spoke very positively of the fairness and reliability of their social worker.
56. The arrangements for the identification, management and intervention for children and young people who are at known or potential risk of child sexual exploitation are not consistently effective. Inspectors identified that in 13 of the 17 cases sampled which related to risk associated with child sexual exploitation, children did not benefit from a co-ordinated response in the provision of services and risk was not identified or managed effectively. In some cases, young people were deemed to be placing themselves at risk through their own choices and actions, demonstrating a poor understanding of coercion factors and grooming processes. As a result of the lack of timely and decisive action and poor understanding of known and potential risk, young people were not being supported or protected effectively.
57. In cases sampled open to the youth support services, inspectors identified some positive work with children and families. However, they found that some cases presented to the missing and exploited children's conference (MAECC), which monitors high-risk cases, were inappropriately managed at TAF and youth support service level. Children were therefore not benefiting from statutory intervention and suitable social work support.
58. The Sexual Trauma Assessment, Recovery and Support (STARS) service provides support and therapeutic intervention to children, young people and their parents and carers who have been affected by sexual assault and abuse, including trafficking for sexual exploitation. Inspectors saw young people who access this service benefiting from the support provided.
59. The emergency duty service has a good interface with daytime services and works well with other partner agencies and foster carers. An extended hours service provides family support out of office hours, ensuring that children and families are able to access support when they need it.
60. The local authority has been successful in supporting troubled families, in particular families who have older children and who require intensive intervention through the troubled families' initiative. Families receive help through the family support service, which has successfully worked with 858 families and helped 'turn around' 412 of them as of 31st March 2014. This

demonstrates a positive picture in improving the lives and circumstances of older children.

61. There is a wide range of services available to meet the needs of homeless 16- and 17-year-old young people, including supported accommodation, young people's hostels and group-living with intensive support. Services for 16- and 17-year-olds include advice and guidance, family mediation and support for their education and training. When young people are homeless, including asylum seeking young people, they are usually accommodated quickly in safe, suitable accommodation. Those living in accommodation in multiple occupancy are in safe and suitable housing with other young people. They receive regular support from professionals such as key workers and personal advisers.
62. The local authority maintains a clear and up-to-date record of children missing education. At the time of inspection, 158 children were missing education. Inspectors found evidence of effective reductions in one area, with 101 cases causing concern in April 2014 being successfully reduced to nine by November 2014.
63. There are sound processes in place to identify children and young people who are not in receipt of full time education. Eighty per cent of registered alternative provision is of good or better quality, and the authority has developed a quality assurance framework to assist schools in monitoring their use of alternative provision. There is a plan for this to be disseminated.
64. Good monitoring arrangements ensure sound oversight of young people's welfare by education welfare officers and youth support services. Arrangements include routine reviews of cases, home visits, tuition and a persistent approach by professionals to find solutions for individual children on part-time timetables.
65. There is a strong and well-established elective home education (EHE) service in the county. Where children are electively home educated, cases are effectively escalated where children are not receiving a suitable education, and good advice and practical tips are given to families to help promote the education of their children. The number of children who are educated at home has risen significantly, to over 1,000 children in 2013, almost double the 2011 figure. The authority does not have enough information on the needs of all children who are home educated, including those with a history of social care involvement. More could be done to better understand the cohort and target resources.
66. Where private fostering arrangements are identified, initial visits are carried out within a week and private fostering assessments are carried out in a timely manner. The number of children and young people who are known to be privately fostered is low, only 14 as of November 2014, which is a decrease of 10 from the 24 notifications in 2013–14. The local authority produces awareness-raising leaflets, and display posters for schools, health organisations, housing, faith groups and citizens' advice bureaus, but it does not collate any

information in relation to high-risk groups to inform the targeting of awareness-raising work.

67. Some good and proactive work is taking place within the LADO service to increase the child focus in the management and investigation of allegations. In cases seen by inspectors, the advice and actions given by LADOs were appropriate. Due to the high volume of referrals, the service is currently unable to fully monitor and review actions in line with the local authority's procedures; the authority is planning to increase capacity to address this.
68. Inspectors saw good consideration being given to culture, ethnicity, disability and gender on cases. Positive use was seen of interpreting services to support families where English is not their first language, with examples where this had been tailored to the needs of the family and context. Ethnicity and faith are routinely recorded on case files.

Key judgement	Judgement grade
The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence	Requires improvement
<p>Summary</p> <p>Children are only looked after when their needs require this but decisions for children to become looked after are not always timely.</p> <p>Extensive work on the Public Law Outline has led to a significant reduction in the duration of recent care proceedings. Robust evidence is presented to courts at the outset of proceedings in most cases. Family group conferences could be further strengthened as part of the pre-proceedings work.</p> <p>Looked after children have stable relationships with social workers, who visit them regularly and know them well. Children’s care plans are reviewed regularly. The quality of assessments, care plans and pathway plans requires improvement so that these consistently identify children’s needs and how these needs will be addressed.</p> <p>Children are suitably placed with carers who can meet their needs. Work is being undertaken on foster carer recruitment to increase local placement capacity so that children and young people can be placed near to their families, friends and communities.</p> <p>The response to children going missing from care is not consistent and needs to ensure that return interviews are routinely offered, to give young people the opportunity to talk about their experience and to support them in keeping safe.</p> <p>Most looked after children are in good schools, which they attend regularly. No looked after child has been permanently excluded from school in the past three years, and this reflects good practice. The number of fixed-term exclusions is reducing.</p> <p>Not enough looked after children make good educational progress between the ages of seven and 16. Although most children have an up-to-date personal education plan, the quality of these varies greatly and some do not reflect the views of young people or specify their personal goals.</p> <p>Performance on the completion of health assessments is improving from a low base. Good work has been undertaken to make sure that children placed outside the authority have health assessments. Further work is required on the quality of these. Care leavers do not receive a copy of their health histories on leaving care.</p> <p>There is a good range of accommodation for care leavers, who live in places where they feel safe. Work with unaccompanied asylum seeking young people is particularly strong. Not enough care leavers aged over 19 participate in education, employment or training.</p> <p>Adoption performance is good and there is good practice at key stages of the adoption journey. This includes the recruitment and assessment of adopters,</p>	

planning, family finding, matching and provision of post-adoption support.

Family finding is a strength of the adoption service, and priority is given to finding the most suitable permanence option to meet children's needs. Workers are tenacious and committed in their attempts to secure adoption where appropriate, and use a range of family finding activities to achieve the best outcomes. Brothers and sisters are placed together wherever possible.

69. At the end of August 2014, 783 children were being looked after by the local authority. This is a reduction from a peak of 852 in October 2013, with numbers remaining stable since April 2014.
70. The Extended Hours team undertakes effective edge of care work with children aged 10 to 15. The team offers intensive family support for up to 12 weeks to help families stay together. Last year the service worked with 224 children, of whom only 18 became looked after. No cases were seen where children were looked after inappropriately. In some instances seen, the decision for children to become looked after should have been made earlier.
71. The local authority has done considerable work on developing a clear pre-proceedings process in line with the revised Public Law Outline (PLO), and work in this area is improving. Senior managers and legal services now monitor children in the PLO process to ensure that cases are progressing.
72. Social workers and their managers have access to clear legal advice through regularly scheduled legal planning meetings. Letters before proceedings are clear about the local authority's concerns and what needs to change. The local authority recognises that more referrals should be made for family group conferences at the pre-proceedings stage, as currently the most significant factor in delay within proceedings is the late assessment of potential family and friends carers. In the large majority of cases where a family group conference does take place, this supports the family to develop a potentially workable plan.
73. The local authority has good arrangements in place to ensure that assessments are undertaken before proceedings are started, including specialist assessments where needed. The authority has developed a parenting assessment model which is used to provide assessments to court. Examples of these assessments seen were thorough in the breadth and depth of information gathered, although the analysis of this information could be stronger.
74. The average length of care proceedings has fallen to 34 weeks, but remains above the expected 26-week timescale, with a legacy of ongoing older cases largely preventing further improvement against this indicator. Performance for cases issued more recently shows an improving picture, with 17 of the 22 cases issued between January and March 2014 concluding in an average of 23 weeks. For the other five cases, the local authority is clear about the reasons for the longer duration. Cafcass reports positive relationships between guardians, independent reviewing officers and front line social workers.

75. The number of looked after children rehabilitated home under placement with parent arrangements is low. Placement with parents reports are completed by social workers and signed off by senior managers. Reports seen were well completed, with evidence to show why the placement was safe and suitable. Appropriate support and monitoring is in place for these arrangements.
76. The response to children going missing from care is not sufficiently rigorous in many cases. Liaison between the local authority and the police does not always result in effective, timely plans to ensure that young people are found quickly and kept safe. Independent return interviews are not routinely offered to young people and in some instances, children with a significant history of missing episodes were not seen by an independent person following their return. This meant that opportunities to take suitable action and understand why young people are going missing are lost. The local authority does not have an effective way of monitoring missing episodes, which would support the identification of patterns and trends.
77. Looked after children benefit from stable relationships with social workers, as a result of which they get to know them well. Social workers visit children regularly and are able to accurately describe their personalities, wishes and feelings. However, the positive relationships between social workers and children are not consistently reflected in focused work or in helping children to understand their plans for the future.
78. The ongoing assessment of looked after children's needs is undertaken by social workers through their reports for reviews and, for those over 16, their pathway plans. The quality of these assessments is variable and many do not present sufficient information to allow children's needs to be clearly understood. Even where a good range of information is presented, this is not always analysed well enough to identify the most important issues and give a clear picture of what needs to change for children. Care plans also vary in quality, with some lacking clear actions and timescales.
79. Performance on the completion of review health assessments for 2013–2014 is 76%, which is an improvement from a low base. Difficulties in completing health assessments have been recognised by the local authority and positive initiatives and additional resources have been introduced to improve performance, particularly for children placed outside Surrey. The designated doctor oversees the health information for all children becoming looked after to ensure that referrals for initial health assessments contain relevant information. The completion rate for initial health assessments is improving, at 86%. The quality of health assessments is variable. Important issues are missed in some, and not all contain enough information to make them useful for ensuring that children's health needs are addressed effectively.
80. The '3Cs' (CAMHS for Children in Care) service provides valued support for children and advice to social workers and foster carers. The looked after children's health team is proactive in making links with counterparts in other

local authorities to ensure that the health needs of young people placed out of authority are met, though this does not always result in a service being provided. Examples were seen where young people were provided with the offer of therapeutic support as part of their placement package, while the health needs of children placed out of authority are scrutinised at reviews and shown to be being met in most cases.

81. The virtual school has experienced some staff turnover and although the head teacher is newly appointed, they have accurately identified the strengths and areas for development in the support available to looked after children.
82. The attainment of looked after children varies year on year. Younger children get a good start in their education and achieve well at Key Stage 1, where 85% achieved level 2 or above. In Key Stage 1, children achieved 89% in reading, 78% in writing and 89% in mathematics. The most recent data show good improvements, with a very good proportion of looked after children achieving the level of attainment expected of all children.
83. The picture deteriorates for 7 to 11 year-olds in Key Stage 2, where the gap between looked after children and their peers is greater on all measures. Not enough looked after children make good progress between the ages of seven and 16. In 2012/13 the attainment gap between looked after children and their peers was 2% greater than looked after children in similar areas and 12.8% greater than the England average.
84. In 2013/14 the proportion of looked after children achieving 5 GCSEs including English and mathematics improved to 15%, but the gap between these children and their peers remains too wide.
85. At 90%, a very good proportion of looked after children are well supported to continue their education in years 12 and 13.
86. The local authority has a good understanding of the looked after children cohort; the virtual head teacher has quickly grasped where improvements are needed. The authority's priorities for improvement are appropriate, such as closing the attainment gap, closer scrutiny of personal education plans, extending these to all young people past the age of 16, improved monitoring of the pupil premium and further reductions in the use of fixed term exclusions. Some of these developments are at the early stages of implementation so it is too early to demonstrate impact.
87. Most looked after children (79%) attend a good or better school. The individual circumstances of children are considered well, should a school be judged to require improvement or become inadequate. A small number of looked after children attend alternative education provision, and most of these are on full timetables. The virtual school has good knowledge of these children's whereabouts, circumstances and progress.

88. Most looked after children have an up-to-date personal education plan (PEP), but the quality of these varies greatly. Too many are incomplete and lack information on the prior attainment of children and the progress that they make. Children's views are not well represented and academic targets are not sufficiently specific. The best plans carefully consider the individual child, their circumstances and aspirations; they contain good information on children's academic and personal development and what specific actions are in place to support the child's progress. In recognition of the need to improve the quality of PEPs, the local authority has revised their format to include a 'pupil voice' section and has developed an audit process to routinely review plans.
89. The use of the pupil premium is closely targeted at activities that directly support young people's educational goals; this is closely monitored by the virtual school. Inspectors saw good examples of this use, such as the provision of additional one-to-one tuition. The virtual school supports the transition of children between schools and the different phases of their education. The educational support worker carries out visits to the more vulnerable children and provides practical support, such as essential equipment to support their move.
90. Attendance at school is much improved. There have been very significant reductions in the last three years in the proportion of children who are persistently absent from school. The close monitoring of attendance and early alerts when children's attendance deteriorates enable the virtual school to intervene where appropriate. An increasing number of children receive awards from the virtual school for achieving 100% attendance.
91. There is a well-established track record of not excluding children and young people permanently. There have been no permanent exclusions of looked after children since 2009/2010. The rate of fixed term exclusions is steadily decreasing. Between 2011/12 and 2013/14 the number of days lost to fixed term exclusions reduced by a third, from 169 to 112.
92. A significant number of looked after children are placed more than 20 miles from home. The local authority is not ensuring a sufficiency of placement choice so that children can be placed closer to home when this is in their best interests. The authority's sufficiency strategy highlights the need to increase the number of local foster placements and work has been initiated to this end, but as yet the number of fostering households is not increasing. During 2013–2014, 37 fostering households were approved (with another 24 in progress), but 79 households ceased to foster. During the inspection there were no in-house fostering placements available for children over 12 years of age.
93. The local authority currently has 85 children placed with independent foster carers, of whom 60 have been placed for more than two years and 37 for more than 5 years. This demonstrates the local authority's commitment to meeting the long-term needs of these children. Independent-sector foster carers who spoke with inspectors were very positive about the support provided to children

by the local authority. Providers highlighted that children were visited regularly and statutory reviews were held on time. Most of the children were in long term placements and those who required it received support from CAMHS.

94. The assessment of foster carers is undertaken well, with examples seen of complex issues being handled effectively. The fostering panel scrutinises well the documents presented to them and undertakes thorough exploration of assessments and reviews. Foster carers feel that they are well supported and offered good training opportunities. They are particularly positive about the social pedagogy training offered by the local authority, describing this as life changing in the effect it has had on their approach to caring for children.
95. Ninety-five per cent of children and young people who live in residential placements are in settings that have been judged good or better by Ofsted. No children live in inadequate provision. Decisions for children to be placed in external placements are overseen by senior managers. Placement stability is good, with just 8.3% of children having had three or more placement moves in 2013–14.
96. Inspectors found that health needs of children placed out of area are being met, with evidence of general and specialist services such as CAMHS being provided as appropriate. In some instances there was insufficient consideration given to how the placement will address the behavioural difficulties which contributed to previous placement breakdown. Education needs of looked after children placed out of area are monitored and well supported.
97. A significant number of children and young people are living with family and friends carers. Family and friends carers spoken to by inspectors demonstrated a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and were engaging effectively in training and development opportunities. Inspectors saw suitable placements, positive assessments and effective support provided to family and friends carers from the fostering team.
98. Children are well matched with carers in most cases, and are placed with their brothers and sisters when appropriate. A significant number of children achieve permanence through special guardianship orders, and plans seen by inspectors were in children's best interests, with the placements being supported appropriately following the making of the order.
99. Children and young people are encouraged to pursue their hobbies and interests, and this is monitored through their reviews. Foster carers have an appropriate understanding of their delegated authority to make decisions for children, though friends and family carers spoken to were less clear about this.
100. There has been positive work with some children about their wishes and feelings for a family and in undertaking life story work, but this needs to extend to all children as appropriate. A good range of materials is used to help children understand their feelings of both loss and gain in adoption and fostering.

101. Looked after reviews are held regularly and 91% were held on time in the year to July 2014. While inspectors saw some good examples of effective challenge, independent reviewing officers do not always ensure that care plans fully meet young peoples' needs or that they are moving forward at an appropriate pace. However, health and education needs are well considered. Young people do not always attend their reviews, even when of an age where this could be expected and facilitated. This means that their views, wishes and feelings are not always as clearly represented as they could be.
102. The needs of children and young people relating to diversity are considered well. This is particularly the case for unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.
103. Reviewing officers routinely consider permanence planning at the first review, and in a majority of cases this results in a clear view on the quality of these plans. In a large majority of cases children are having contact with those important to them, and this is well considered in their reviews. Children and young people are routinely advised of their right to make a complaint as part of the looked after review process, and details of how to do this are included in the minutes of reviews.
104. The children in care council provides all looked after young people with information about their rights and entitlements. Complaints are dealt with effectively, and the learning from these is reflected in training, service briefings and practice reviews.
105. Young people involved in the children in care council feel it is supportive, and talk positively about the sense of belonging they derive from their membership and the positive activities they undertake. They acknowledge that at this point they are not fully representative of all Surrey's looked after children, though they do write to every young person who becomes looked after. The children in care council is actively involved in the work of the local authority and their views are regularly shared with the corporate parenting committee, which responds to these. As a result of representations from the children in care council, the authority has introduced a Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme solely for looked after children and care leavers.

The graded judgment for adoption performance is that it is good

106. Adoption performance in Surrey is good due to sound practice at all key stages of the adoption journey. Surrey's performance against the adoption scorecard is showing a positive trajectory. For the 3-year average 2010–2013, it took 551 days between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family. Current performance shows that this is improving and is now 519 days.

107. For children who are adopted, the time between the local authority receiving court authority to place and deciding on a match has reduced from 180 days for the 3-year average 2010–2013 to 169 days. Sixty-three per cent of children wait less than 20 months between entering care and moving in with their adoptive family. Surrey's performance is better than that of its statistical neighbours and the England average.
108. Adoption is considered for all children who are unable to return home to their birth families and who need a permanent home. The number of adoption orders rose from 35 in 2012–2013 to 59 in 2013–2014. The 2014–2015 figures for the first five months of the year show that 14 adoption orders were made.
109. The number of special guardianship orders granted in 2013–2014 exceeded the number of adoption orders, with a total of 66. The figures for the first five months of this year show that the number of special guardianship orders granted remains significantly higher than that of adoption orders. The local authority does not have a full understanding of the reasons for these changes and the actions it might need to take to increase the future number of children successfully placed with adoptive families.
110. Of the 24 children waiting for adoption at November 2014, most have matches agreed or expressions of interest. A significant number of these cases include plans to place brothers and sisters together. The authority's adoption annual report for 2014 highlights adoption service developments. The authority has no specific adoption or recruitment strategy, but is currently in the process of producing this.
111. In 2013–2014, 14% of children had a permanence decision that changed from adoption, which was higher than both statistical neighbours and the England average. Inspectors found that in such cases the changes had been appropriate and based on children's needs. Where decisions have changed from adoption there is evidence that family finding has been thorough and includes a period of time to secure adoption or test the viability of adoption. Various reasons led to changes in adoption decisions, including assessments of connected persons, court directions to curtail adoption family finding and that further efforts to look for adopters for children with special needs were unlikely to be successful within the child's time frame.
112. The adoption service has developed the two-stage recruitment process for adopters. The first stage, known as learn2adopt, involves an information session and interview for those interested in adoption. Since April 2014 there have been 259 enquiries from prospective adopters and the service has held 142 learn2adopt sessions. Surrey provides an open door response to potential adopters, which is meeting the needs of Surrey's children as evidenced by the low number of children waiting. Post-approval training on areas such as attachment develops adopters' understanding of children's needs and encourages potential adopters to consider a wider range of children. Most

assessments are completed within timescales or agreements to extend are made with adopters.

113. Surrey has a large pool of waiting adopters. The number of adopters approved since April 2014 is 46 and there are currently 40 waiting for a match. Most approved adopters are White British and want to adopt younger children. Recently expanded Adoption South Central consortium provides opportunities for links with Surrey children and adopters.
114. Since April 2014, five foster to adopt placements have been made, which indicates some early success in this area. Inspectors saw a number of cases where foster carers have adopted children already placed with them. These decisions were based on meeting children's individual needs, and resulted in children securing permanence with carers where they had already formed positive attachments.
115. Adopters seen by inspectors expressed positive views about their working relationship with the council. All were matched with children and some spoke positively about the timeliness with which this occurred following approval, demonstrating the authority's priority and sense of urgency in securing permanence for children.
116. Family finding is a strength of the adoption service. Workers are committed and determined to secure adoption and use a range of family finding activities. For example, the 'children waiting' list can be accessed by adopters via a secure website. Adopters and children are referred to the national adoption register, mostly in a timely manner. Profiles and DVDs of children are available and two adoption activity days have taken place this year. Family finding is kept on track by the use of regular progress meetings, which provide a good record of activity and recommendations. The minutes are shared with independent reviewing officers and further management oversight is secured through permanence planning meetings.
117. Brothers and sisters are placed together as a priority, and in cases seen there has been success in doing so. Together or apart assessments can be considered by The Attachment Project (TAP), which is a multi-agency consultation panel designed to facilitate and promote attachment between children and their families. Inspectors saw thorough assessments presented to the panel, with clear recommendations to assist planning for children.
118. Adoption files viewed are comprehensive and reflect good practice. Documentation, such as prospective adopters' reports, is detailed and contains evidence of good reflection and analysis, including the use of research and direct work with birth children. There is evidence of good management oversight and regular use of extended case discussion. Matching is thoroughly explored, with matching checklists, planning agreements, relevant legal and medical advice and consideration of post-adoption support. The adoption panel minutes are comprehensive and show that reports to panel are of good quality

and that social workers know the adopters and children well. There is evidence of good collaborative working between the agency and the adoption panel.

119. The four agency decision makers and the panel chair meet quarterly to discuss practice issues, trends and any barriers to panel functioning. Legal advice is readily available and quality assurance arrangements are good, with evidence of challenge. The panel receives quarterly updates on the number of adopters and children waiting and adoption activity, and this supports effective tracking of children's plans. Panel members receive appropriate training to assist them in carrying out their panel functions.
120. Surrey has a good range of post-adoption support services. Since January 2014, there have been 17 post-order support needs assessments completed, of which 10 have been allocated support. Assessments, including those completed by the educational psychologist, are detailed and contain good engagement with children and their adoptive parents. Adoption support plans are also well recorded and reviewed, with good management oversight.
121. The range of post-adoption support services ensures that children and families are able to access services when needed at different points during the adoption journey. Between January 2014 and October 2014, over 200 children and families received support from a range of professionals, including a birth relatives' worker. Families benefit from the post-adoption centre for counselling. The agency currently supports a high number of letterbox contacts and provides family support workers to supervise direct contact arrangements.

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

122. The care leaving service supports 450 young people at any one time. The majority of care leavers have an up-to-date pathway plan. Some young people told inspectors that pathway planning felt rushed and was too focused on filling in boxes rather than developing a plan for their future.
123. Of the cases sampled by inspectors, the majority of plans were good but a number required improvement and a small number were inadequate. The pathway plans seen that require improvement were not sufficiently focused on outcomes and targets and lacked timescales, so it was unclear when actions would be completed.
124. Good plans accounted well for the full range of needs of young people and included practical steps to meet young people's housing, health, education, training and employment needs. These plans included specific actions, had clear timescales to complete tasks and contingency arrangements. They captured young people's aspirations well and helped them to set realistic goals in taking their next steps.

125. Too many care leavers (40%) aged over 19 years are not in education, training or employment. Programmes to support young people's participation are in place and continue to be developed, but are yet to have sufficient impact.
126. Care leavers benefit from the good corporate focus on increasing apprenticeship places in the county. There are currently 16 young people undertaking apprenticeships and 11 others have completed apprenticeships and moved into employment. A small number of care leavers benefit from a 'work based sponsor' to support their readiness for work. Work experience opportunities within the local authority and its partners are being developed. A pilot traineeship programme has had some success, leading to three out of five young people moving successfully into an apprenticeship.
127. There is good support for care leavers to access higher education, with 42 young people currently at university. The local authority funds accommodation during holiday periods where necessary and supports them with their university fees.
128. The local authority maintains good contact with young people leaving care, and kept in touch with 90% of care leavers in the last quarter. In the majority of cases seen personal advisers saw young people regularly. Young people have the opportunity to build stable relationships with their adviser and are positive about the help they receive and how well their advisors know them. Those with a disability have an allocated personal advisor and receive additional support from a social worker from the adult social care team to help with their transition to adult services. The leaving care service perseveres well through text, telephone and visits with those who are reluctant to engage with their personal advisor.
129. The leaving care team caters well for the diverse range of young people they support. Care leavers are encouraged to participate in a very good variety of activities to help them make friends, feel a sense of belonging and enjoy life. Religious and cultural events are celebrated and activities for care leavers with children are regularly organised. Care leavers who have secured apprenticeships within the children's rights service support and promote the participation of their peers in enrichment activities well. Those taking part in the recent summer holiday highly valued the experience.
130. There is highly effective work undertaken with asylum seeking young people. They are accommodated promptly in suitable placements. Good assessments of need and creative packages of support are put in place and take full account of young people's cultural, religious, learning and social needs. Young people generally settle quickly, develop their friendships and interests and engage well in education.
131. Care leavers know how to complain, and complaints are dealt with promptly and fairly. The children in care council actively promotes the views and rights of care leavers and organises celebrations, social events, trips and meals out. Care

leavers told inspectors that they were aware of their entitlements, such as the £2,000 setting up home allowance. Most care leavers report that they had the support they need to develop their independent living skills and felt able to manage their own money.

132. Support for care leavers to manage their health and promote healthy living is inconsistent, and not all young people are provided with a copy of their health history as part of leaving care arrangements. The local authority has recognised this as an area for development and is piloting a health passport for care leavers. Inspectors identified cases where there was delay in some young people accessing support for their mental health needs. Most care leavers are registered with a doctor and a dentist.
133. Most young people spoken to reported good support from their personal advisors when moving towards independence, but inspectors found a small number of cases where young people were not given effective practical support to achieve their goals. Some care leavers told inspectors that preparation for independent living begins too late.
134. Care leavers told inspectors that they felt safe where they lived. The staying put policy is well developed and young people are effectively encouraged to stay with their foster carers where possible; others move into a range of independent and semi-independent accommodation across the county and in other neighbouring local authorities. Care leavers spoken to by inspectors have very good relationships with their carers and inspectors saw good examples of bespoke packages of support to sustain placements, including kinship care and conversion to supported lodgings.
135. The re-commissioning of accommodation has broadened the range of options on offer to young people. It includes a mixed market of social and private housing so that young people have some choices about where they live to help them stay close to friends and family, work or college. Emergency accommodation through 'Night Stop' has been commissioned and is being rolled out. Bed and breakfast accommodation is only used in emergency situations and as a last resort. Those living in accommodation of multiple occupancy, such as the YMCA, receive regular support from key workers and their personal advisors.

Key judgement	Judgement grade
Leadership, management and governance	Inadequate
<p>Summary</p> <p>The Chief Executive, the Director of Children’s Services, and elected members failed to ensure that the major restructure of children’s services in March 2014 delivered effective services to safeguard and promote children’s and young people’s welfare. Senior managers and partners failed to foresee or risk-assess the scale and impact of the changes within the reorganisation of services for children in need, in particular the decision to disband child in need services across the county and realign thresholds for social work services. This has resulted in a significant number of children in need identified in this inspection not receiving services commensurate with their assessed need, including their need for protection. This has left children at known and potential risk and is a serious omission.</p> <p>Insufficient progress has been made against a number of areas for development identified in previous inspections and the pace of change has been too slow.</p> <p>Inspectors found that where children and young people were identified as being at immediate risk and met the criteria for specialist services, including child protection and looked after children services, intervention was overall timely and appropriate.</p> <p>Strategic leaders and elected members and other senior leaders are committed corporate parents, and inspectors saw demonstrable improvement in some services to looked after children and young people. For example, good support is provided to care leavers to access accommodation and higher education. The children in care council is an active group and their views influence decisions affecting their lives.</p> <p>The absence of independence within the Principal Social Worker role has meant that the local authority has not benefited from objective professional challenge within its leadership team. This potentially compromises the effectiveness of the role and the independence of feedback on front line practice.</p> <p>Inspectors found that some social workers did not fully demonstrate learning from recent serious case reviews, and a number of cases referred back to the local authority contained concerns identified in recent reviews.</p> <p>The authority’s performance management and quality assurance arrangements do not support the effective monitoring of child in need cases, missing episodes and children at risk of child sexual exploitation. This has resulted in trends and patterns not being effectively analysed to drive improvement. The absence of performance information means that the quality of services for children stepped down to universal or targeted services are not effectively monitored.</p> <p>The commissioning of targeted provision to meet the needs and joint commissioning of services has resulted in improved health resources for children in care.</p>	

136. The Chief Executive, the Director of Children Services, elected members and other senior leaders are committed to improving outcomes for all vulnerable children and young people. This commitment is reflected in Surrey County Council's priorities for driving improvement in children and young people's services. However, there has been a corporate failure to ensure that the planned major restructure of children's services in March 2014 effectively safeguarded and promoted children's welfare. Senior managers and partners failed to anticipate or risk-assess the scale and impact of the reorganisation on children and young people, in particular the impact of disbanding child in need teams across the county.
137. Insufficient progress has been made against some areas of development identified in previous inspections and the pace of change has been too slow. These include recommendations in 2010 that all care leavers have a copy of their health history, and on improving the quality of personal education plans, and a recommendation from 2012 that children in need plans are specific about what needs to change for the child and within what timescales.
138. Following the child protection inspection in 2012 Surrey County Council, in collaboration with its partners, carried out an extensive review of its early help and protection services. The early help strategy 2013–2017 and threshold document were developed over a period of eighteen months, by and with partners, and focused on a refreshed early help offer. This has resulted in universal and targeted services being inappropriately left to manage some complex cases which should be managed within a statutory framework.
139. Inspectors found that too many children in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 were inappropriately stepped down to universal services. This meant that potential risk to children living in families where there is ongoing domestic abuse, parental mental ill-health and substance misuse is not being consistently managed at the appropriate level. The absence of a single process to monitor the progress of cases stepped down means that no one agency had overall responsibility for monitoring the outcomes of intervention.
140. Inspectors found that where children and young people were identified at immediate risk, intervention was timely and appropriate. Thresholds are consistently applied within the multi-agency assessment safeguarding hub (MASH). Inspectors identified positive joint working across the disabled children's teams.
141. The local authority has established performance management and quality assurance arrangements, with regular reporting against a suite of local and national performance priorities at strategic and operational level. Information is supported by a narrative around performance and enables some scrutiny and challenge across strategic boards.
142. However, the authority's performance management and quality assurance arrangements for child in need services, missing episodes and children at risk of

child sexual exploitation are ineffective. Performance monitoring is not underpinned by robust information and analysis of the impact and quality of intervention; this includes the review of decisions to step down cases, which were found by inspectors to be weak or absent. Consequently, the outcomes for children and their families when they were stepped down to universal and targeted service were unknown and not subject to robust scrutiny.

143. Inspectors found significant gaps in managers' performance information for children missing from home and care. For example, the authority does not have a system to monitor and evaluate the arrangements for independent return interviews within the required 72 hours. As a result, opportunities are missed to identify and address risks for children missing, which is critical in ensuring the safety of all children, including looked after children. The local authority also lacks a reliable method to understand patterns and trends across areas and groups for children going missing. This impairs its ability to develop effective strategies to reduce the number of episodes of children going missing.
144. The system for the identification, risk management and tracking of children at risk of child sexual exploitation is underdeveloped. Inspectors found professionals did not consistently demonstrate skills, knowledge and urgency in the responses to young people at known and potential risk for child sexual exploitation. Therefore too many young people were being offered a service not proportionate to their need to be safeguarded.
145. Management oversight of frontline social work practice, while improving, remains inconsistent. Inspectors found that most children and young people identified at immediate risk of significant harm receive a timely response appropriate to need. The decision-making in children in need work was inconsistent, and in some cases seen it was inadequate. Many of those cases requiring ongoing statutory child in need intervention were closed prematurely. This is directly related to the local authority's decision not to provide a social work service for children who at the conclusion of the single assessment process, did not meet the criteria for specialist child protection services. Services are not being provided based on children's assessed need and risk.
146. The quality and frequency of supervision is variable, ranging from good, with reflective analysis of cases on a monthly basis, to significant gaps in supervision sessions with records not linked to previous decisions. This means that managers do not consistently assess progress on cases and risk to children.
147. The dissemination of learning from reviews is undertaken through briefings and focused lunchtime learning sessions. Inspectors found that some social workers did not fully demonstrate learning from recent serious case reviews (SCRs) and a number of cases referred back to the local authority contained concerns identified in recent SCRs.
148. Surrey's Children and Young People three-year plan is drawn from the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA). High priority is given to reducing the impact of

domestic abuse, parental mental ill-health and children in poverty, and to improving outcomes for looked after children. These are appropriate priorities but the needs analysis informing them is under-developed. The plan is delivered through the range of partnership forums including the Local Safeguarding Board, Children's Board, Health and Wellbeing Board and the Corporate Parenting and Youth Justice Boards, in addition to the Schools Forum and Community Safety, and priorities across boards are aligned.

149. The commissioning of early help services has been underpinned by analysis of need identified in the JSNA and evaluation of the impact of current provision. Commissioning objectives are clearly understood across the partnership and these result in services being targeted and resourced effectively. The processes are transparent and have encouraged wider engagement of the health and voluntary sectors.
150. The commissioning of targeted provision to meet the needs of children with complex health needs and the joint commissioning of services with partner agencies including health is being developed. This has resulted in additional health resources being made available for children in care and those with additional needs.
151. The Chief Executive, the Director of Children's Services, elected members and other senior leaders are passionate and take seriously their role as corporate parents. The Lead Member for children's services chairs the corporate parenting board, is well informed about many aspects of children's social care and is actively involved strategically and operationally. For example, she routinely meets with staff and young people and carries out 'deep dive' audits of work.
152. The children in care council regularly participates in corporate parenting board and holds them to account. The achievements of looked after children and care leavers are celebrated at a number of annual events. A bursary funded by elected members enables all looked after children to have access to additional funding for specific interests.
153. There is good support for care leavers to access higher education and accommodation commensurate with their assessed need, and they are encouraged to participate in a variety of activities. Priority is given to care leavers to access a range of apprenticeships and training opportunities.
154. The authority's strategic commitment to securing permanence for children who cannot return to their families is good.
155. Effective analysis, planning and access to a comprehensive career framework for qualified and non-social work staff is helping to retain staff. The recent reconfiguration of teams has reduced the workload for individual social workers to between 15 and 20 children, ensuring that staff have the time to see and spend time with children. There is support for unqualified staff to train as social workers, and an academy for newly qualified social workers is successful in

supporting Surrey staff to train as social workers. There is a 20% vacancy rate for social workers, but vacant posts are appropriately filled by agency workers so that staffing levels are maintained.

156. The principal social worker (PSW) position is held by the Deputy Director, Children, Schools and Families. The absence of independence within the PSW position does not support the principles underpinning the PSW role, such as providing feedback between frontline staff and senior officers, and is a missed opportunity to bring additional professional challenge into the leadership system.
157. The local authority has constructive relationships with Cafcass and the judiciary. Effective permanence planning and improved Public Law Outline work pre-proceedings is helping to reduce court time and is leading to more timely decisions for children.

What the local authority inspection judgements mean

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.

Information about the local authority inspection

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

At the same time, HMIC, the CQC, HMI Probation and HMI Prisons conducted pilot inspections of the police force and health, probation and prison services respectively. All the inspectorates used this opportunity to share their findings and better understand the contribution of these services and the local authority to the help, protection and care of children and young people. Each inspectorate conducted their activity under their own statutory powers. As the inspections by HMIC, the CQC, HMI Probation and HMI Prisons were pilot inspections to test new frameworks and methodologies, they will not result in published reports.

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences of children and young people who have needed or still need help and/or protection. This 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 team

The inspection team consisted of 11 of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) from Ofsted.

Lead inspector: Mary Candlin

Deputy lead inspector: Brenda McLaughlin

Team inspectors: Louise Hocking, Tina Shepherd, Michael Ferguson, Jon Bowman, Karen Wareing, Susan Myers, Dominic Stevens, Pietro Battista, Karen McKeown

Quality assurance manager: Nick McMullen

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